XEROX

Xerox University Microfilms
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

WESTERN AMERICANA

Reproduced from the original in the collection of
THE HENRY E. HUNTINGTON LIBRARY AND ART GALLERY

ALTOWAN;

OR,

INCIDENTS OF LIFE AND ADVENTURE

IN

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

BY

AN AMATEUR TRAVELER.

EDITED BY

J. WATSON WEBB.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

11

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
82 CLIFF STREET, NEW YORK.
1846.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1846, by
Harper & Brothers,
In the Clerk's Office of the Southern District of New-York.

NOTICE TO THE READER.

The following story has been written for the amusement of some young friends on Long Island, The sketches of Indian habits and the incidents of the chase which it contains, are taken from life, and the description of the regions where the scene is laid, in the western wilds, is drawn from Nature.

It has been written during voyages over heaving seas and in moments of idleness in various parts of the world; and, just as it is, without even a revision, I offer it to those for whom it was intended. Should it ever go beyond their fireside and be read by others, though I may bespeak their indulgence, I can owe them no apology.

TO

CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN, Esq.

My dear Sir,

Your knowledge and love of woodcraft, and your ability to appreciate a correct picture of the North American Indian—sketched from life by the pencil of a master—prompt this dedication of a work, which will be found, on perusal, one of the very few which exhibits the native of our forests as he was, and still is, where he roams uncontaminated by his intercourse with civilized man, the boundless regions of the Northwest.

There is no one subject upon which such universal ignorance prevails, as in regard to the habits, customs, and character of the North American Indian; and yet almost all Americans imagine, that on this question at least, they are well-informed.* This is very natural; and doubtless, I would have been equally misled by the nursery tales of our country, if it had not been my lot to pass nearly nine years of my life in the army; and most of that period, as you well know, upon our then northwestern frontier

---

* Among the deluded mass, our countryman Cooper stands conspicuous. In common with all of us, he listened in infancy

---

to the nursery tales which had been handed down from generation to generation, with such additions as the love of the marvelous among nursery maids, very naturally prompted; and as Mr. COOPER is not accustomed to doubt the accuracy of his knowledge on any subject, it should not be matter of surprise with those who know him, that he assumes perfectly to understand the Indian character. In consequence of this assumption of knowledge—based solely upon the sources to which I have referred—he has written a series of exceedingly clever books, the chief tendency of which is to perpetuate his own crude conceptions of Indian character, by embodying all the nursery gossip of two centuries, and handing it down to posterity as a picture drawn from life, instead of what it really is—the tradition of the ignorant, embellished by the lovers of the marvelous, to frighten into silence, if not sleep, the restless inmates of the nursery.

I do not make these remarks in any spirit of unkindness to Mr. COOPER, but in the way of protest against his delineation of Indian character; nor do I flatter myself that I can by such protest, prevent, through all time, his caricatures of the North American Indian, being measurably received as faithful portraitures of a race rapidly passing away before the resistless march of civilization. Mr. COOPER has justly won for himself, by his works of fiction, a place in the literary history of his country; and although posterity can not fail to note his literary deficiencies and want of familiarity with the beauties of his native language; and although they may possibly learn that he was a man of violent passions, self-willed, and egotistical to an extent which prompted him, in an evil hour, and for an imaginary slight, to misrepresent and hold up to the ridicule of Europe, the manners, habits, and tastes of his

—at Green Bay, Chicago, the Upper Mississippi, and Missouri—at a period when the white man was only known to the native of the forest through the army, and the Indian trader and *voyageur*, who annually passed into their coun-

---

countrymen—they must ever concede to him talents of a high order, however deficient he may be in genius and literary acquirements. His plain, practical, common-sense view of all subjects which do not involve his personal feelings and prejudices, can not fail to secure him a high rank among his contemporaries; and at the expiration of half a century—when it will matter little whether his picture of American society in 1836, was or was not a ridiculous caricature, prompted by mortified vanity—the only portions of his works which I should desire to see expunged, are his very graphic, but fanciful conceptions of Indian character, and his misrepresentations—I can not use a milder term—of the battle of Lake Erie in the war of 1812.

The biographers of Perry and the historians of the late war, have already very thoroughly exposed the gross injustice done to Perry and the nation in Cooper's account of that naval engagement; while the incidental remarks of this introduction to an authentic work on Indian life, will at least caution the general reader against his delineations of Indian character.

When in 1819, I entered the army, I too, in common with most persons in the Atlantic States, believed in the nursery picture of Indian life which had become traditionary in all our homes; and had I not become a wanderer in the Western wilds, and a sojourner in the *wigwams* of its people, I should doubtless, have been one of the most confiding believers in Mr. Cooper's portrait of the aborigines—based, as it unquestionably is, upon his profound knowledge of their character, acquired in connection with the veritable history of "Mother Goose," and the no less interesting adventures of "Jack the Giant-killer."

try, but confined themselves to its principal water-courses.

After reporting for duty—a boy of seventeen—sixty days of military duty in this harbor, were quite sufficient to give me a surfeit of city garrison life, and to revive in me the earliest promptings of my boyhood—a desire to visit the unknown regions of the great West; to hunt and shoot where the Indian alone had disturbed the game; to angle in streams where the line of the white man and the disciples of the wily WALTON, had never tempted their finny inhabitants; and to roam with the aboriginal savage his native forests; to see him in his native grandeur, and to know him as he was and is, when uncontaminated by contact with that civilization of which he is certain to imbibe all that is vicious, while it fails to impart to him, in return, any of its blessings.

An opportunity soon offered to indulge this early bent of my nature. The autumn of 1819 found me on duty at Detroit, and the following spring, in command of a separate post on Lake Huron. Thenceforward my progress was westward; and during a long period I reveled in those scenes which imagination had ever portrayed as full of excitement and adventure; and the actual charms of which, exceeded even the imaginings of a somewhat ardent temperament.

But it is no part of my intention to write a history of my own adventures in the Far West; and this allusion to them, is simply to remind you that I should be qualified, by experience at least, to judge of any delineation of Indian character which may come under my observation.

Having said this much of myself, permit me to give you a history of "*Altowan*," and apprise you how it happens that I am its editor.

In the summer of 1832, a British half-pay officer visited this city, and we were accidentally thrown much in each other's society. A similarity of tastes and pursuits, soon produced an intimacy, gradually ripening into a friendship, which I trust, is destined to continue through life. He was one of the gallant fellows who fought under Wellington at Waterloo, and bore upon his person honorable marks of his gallantry upon that occasion, and among his insignia, the evidence of his country's gratitude. The second son of one of the most ancient families in Great Britain, with the blood of princes in his veins, and connected by birth and intermarriages with royalty itself, he had retired upon half pay; and in the spirit of adventure, which forms a prominent trait in his character, visited the United States for the sole purpose of penetrating the great wilderness of the West, and partaking in the excitement and adventure which it promised—regardless alike of the privations and dangers inseparable from such a life.

At that period, I was probably, of all others, the person in this city who could best further his views; and when the season for his departure arrived, he carried with him the necessary letters of introduction to my old fellow-soldiers in the West, and to such prominent gentlemen, not in the army, as could, by their position and advice, put him in the way of accomplishing the object of his visit to our shores. Among those to whom I gave him letters, were the late Governor CLARKE, of Missouri, and Generals ATKINSON and ASHLEY. The latter, though not of the army, went annually into the Indian country in military array, to receive on the head-waters of the *Yellow Stone*, the furs and peltries which had been collected during the preceding year, and to furnish the next year's supply of Indian goods to the traders; and it was under his auspices, that our author first visited the Rocky Mountains. When General ASHLEY returned to the haunts of civilization, my friend, accompanied by a small band of hired *voy-*

ageurs, continued his course to the Pacific; visited the different establishments of the Hudson's Bay Company; spent three winters in the Rocky Mountains, in Oregon, and Upper California; and finally, after an absence of three years and a half, returned to St. Louis. During this long sojourn in the wilderness, he had literally suffered every thing but death from hostile bands of Indians—from hunger, exposure, and fatigue. He had met with "hair-breadth 'scapes" of every kind; but he had hunted and killed the grizzly bear and the buffalo; he had seen and lived with the North American Indian in his native wilds; and he had looked upon a country fresh from the hands of the Creator—filled with magnificent lakes, lofty mountains, and boundless prairies, which spoke the nothingness of man, and involuntarily carried the heart and the mind "from nature up to nature's God."

On his return to *St. Louis*, he learned that his brother, the head of his ancient house, had died without issue, and that he was the inheritor of the family title and a princely estate. He came and spent some time with me on Long Island preparatory to his return home; but eager as ever for the life of adventure he had been living, he soon abandoned his purpose, and determined to revisit the great West, accompanied by a large retinue, and an artist of merit to sketch the various scenes which had made an impression upon him during his previous visit. Again was he absent two summers and a winter, devoting his time to hunting, and partaking of all the excitement of that boundless region; and on his return, after spending some time with his earliest friend in America, he sailed for home, to take possession of his paternal estates.

There, in the castle of his ancestors—a venerable pile, erected in 1604—I have since visited him and spent many a happy hour. There, he is not only surrounded by a devoted tenantry, whose cares he makes his own, and a large circle of distinguished friends, who honor and appreciate his virtues; but by galleries of magnificent paintings, executed by our countryman MILLER, from sketches by himself, made during the second visit of the author to the Rocky Mountains, Oregon, and California. And there, too, I took our friend INMAN, during his visit to Europe in 1844; and had his life been spared, the present volumes would have been illustrated by drawings of his, taken from sketches in the portfolio of the author. But our departed friend detailed to you the pleasures of that visit, of which "Salmon Fishing near

Birnam Wood," one of his last works, and so justly admired, is a speaking memento.

When the author first visited the Great West, I urged him to keep a journal of his travels and adventures for publication; but to this he was greatly averse. He made however, a half promise, that he would do something in the way of recording the incidents of his travels, and describing the countries of his wanderings; and the work I now take pleasure in dedicating to you, is the fulfillment of that promise. It was written solely for the eye of my family and for the amusement of my children; and it was only during my last visit to the author, accompanied by Inman, who promised to prepare the illustrations for the work, that publication was determined upon and promised. "The sketches of Indian habits, and the incidents of the chase which it contains, are," he tells us in his notice to the reader, "*taken from life;* and the descriptions of the regions where the scene is laid in the Western wilds, *are drawn from nature.*" This, it is scarcely necessary to say, gives an historical interest to the work; while the reader will find no difficulty in discovering how much of it is fiction, and adopted only to give it additional zest to "his young friends on Long Island."

Oregon and California—the Rocky Mountains and the boundless prairies of the West—have at this time, charms for children of a larger growth than this work was designed to amuse. And although, as the author says, "it was written during voyages over heaving seas, and in moments of idleness in different parts of the world," it is not the less true to nature; because he had with him the original notes made during his sojourn in the Indian country. Since his first visit to the United States, the author has traveled in the inhospitable regions of Northern Russia, and through the more luxurious, though scarcely more civilized, East; and a portion of the manuscript was forwarded to me from Constantinople. It may not be uninteresting to the young traveler to add, that in 1842 the author again visited our country and the scenes of his former adventures,—declaring that it had charms for him which no other land possesses.

Such, my dear sir, is the history of these volumes; and to the lover of woodcraft, and all who would study the habits of the North American Indian in his own wild home, they can not fail to be a very acceptable contribution. How far the instincts of our nature, and the senses of hearing, seeing, and smelling, are affected, or even changed by civilization, is a question which still remains to be decided; and in relation to which, you and I possess *facts*, that are not only startling in themselves, but which warrant a closer research on the part of the curious in such matters. I will relate an instance which came under my own observation, and which to this day I have never been able to explain, except on the hypothesis, that the senses given to man in his native state, being less necessary for him in the artificial life which civilization has substituted, they greatly degenerate; and consequently, that the vision, the hearing, and the sense of smelling in the Indian are so much more acute than in civilized man, that we are frequently disposed to attribute to *instinct*, what properly speaking, is simply the habitual exercise of these senses as originally bestowed by the Almighty.

In the winter of 1821–22, I was stationed at Chicago, then about one hundred and fifty miles in advance of the pioneer settlers. All west and north of us, with the exception of the old French settlements at Green Bay and *Prairie du Chien*, was an untrodden wilderness, or trodden only by the lords of the forest and the adventurous trapper and *voyageur*. A short time previous, the fifth regiment of infantry, under the command of Colonel SNELLING, had established itself on the Upper Mississippi, at the Falls of St. Anthony. Early in February, 1822, the principal chief of the *Potawatomies*, one of the most friendly tribes west of Lake Michigan, reported to the Indian agent at our post, that his tribe had received an invitation from the *Sioux* Indians to unite with them in cutting off the garrison at St. Peter's, at the Falls of St. Anthony; and, as evidence of his truth, produced the tobacco said to have been sent to them by the *Sioux*, and which generally accompanies such propositions for a war league. As no doubt was entertained of the truth of this report, the commanding officer directed me (the adjutant) to make an arrangement with some of the voyageurs connected with the Indian trading house near the fort, to carry the intelligence to Fort Armstrong, situated on Rock Island in the Mississippi, near the mouth of Rock River, thence to be forwarded to Colonel SNELLING. They however, refused all my offers; alleging that none of them had ever crossed the country in the winter season—that it was impracticable, &c., &c.

The same love of adventure and excitement which had induced me to exchange a station in this city for Detroit, and then from an artillery into an infantry regiment, added to a conviction that the lives of a whole regiment of officers and men, their wives and children, were in jeopardy, and that it was possible to avert the impending blow, induced me to volunteer to be the bearer of the intelligence to Fort Armstrong.

I accordingly took my departure, accompanied by a sergeant, who was a good woodsman, and an Indian of my own age. The first two or three days, were days of weariness to me, and of frolick and fun to the Indian; because we necessarily traveled on foot, in consequence of the extreme severity of the weather, with our provisions on a pack-horse, and a horse to break the snow, and make a trail in which to walk. The actual suffering consisted in riding our regular tour; but I, being "all unused" to travel through the snow on foot for hour after hour consecutively, was weary and worn out when we came to bivouac at night; while the Indian, was apparently, as fresh as when we started, and cracked his jokes without mercy upon the fagged Che-mo-ca-mun, or "Long Knife," as they denominate all whites. I found, however—as I had been told by those who were learned in such matters—that the endurance of the Indian, bears no comparison with that of the white man. He will start off on a "dog trot," and accomplish his eighty or a hundred miles in an incredible short space of time; but when he comes to day after day of regular work and endurance, he soon begins to flag, and finally becomes worn out; while each succeeding day only inures the white man to his work, trains him for further exertion, and the better fits him for the following day's labors. Thus it was with my Indian and myself; and on the evening of the fourth day, I came to camp fresh as when we started, while the Indian came in, weary and fatigued; and of course, it was then my turn to boast of the endurance of the Che-mo-ca-mun, and the effeminacy of the "Niche-nawby."

My instructions were, to employ the Potawatomie as a guide to the Rock River, where the country of the Winebagoes commenced, and then take a Winebago as a guide to Fort Armstrong—the leading object being so to arrange our line of travel as to avoid the prairies, upon which, we would necessarily suffer from the cold. I had been apprised that I would find an old Canadian *voyageur* residing with his Indian family in a trading hut on Rock River, and it was to him my Potawatomie was to guide me.

Toward evening on the fifth day, we reached our place of destination; and old *La Saller*, recognizing us as whites, and of course from the fort, intimated by signs, as he conducted us to the loft of his hut, that we were to preserve a profound silence. All who live in the Indian country learn to obey signs; and it is wonderful how soon we almost forget to ask questions. I knew that something was wrong, but it never entered my head to inquire what it was—Indian-like, quite willing to bide my time, even if the finger closely pressed upon the lips of the old man had not apprised me that I should get no answer until it suited his discretion to make a communication.

It was nearly dark when we were consigned to the loft of the good old man; and for three long hours we saw him not. During this period there was abundant time for meditation upon our position; when all at once the profound stillness which reigned in and around the hut, was broken by the startling sound of a *Winebago war-dance* in our immediate vicinity! This, as you may imagine, was no very agreeable sound for my sergeant or myself, but it was perfectly horrifying to my *Potawatomie;* all of which tribe, as also their neighbours, were as much in awe of a *Winebago*, as is a flying-fish of a dolphin. But all suspense has its end; and at length the war-dance ceased—the music of which, at times, could only be likened to the shrieks of the damned, and then, again, partook of the character of the recitative in an Italian opera, until, at length, it died away, and all was silence.

Then came old *La Saller*, whose head, whitened by the snows of eighty winters, as it showed itself through the trap in the floor, was a far more acceptable sight than I could have anticipated it would be when I left the fort. Having been informed who we were, and my desire to procure a *Winebago* to guide me to Fort Armstrong, he inquired whether we had not heard the war-dance, and if we could not conjecture its object! He then proceeded to state that two Winebagoes, who had been tried and sentenced to be executed for the murder of a soldier at Fort Armstrong, had escaped from the jail at *Kaskaskia*, and arrived on the river a few days previous; that in consequence, the whole nation was in a state of extraordinary excitement, and that the war-dance to which we had listened, was preparatory to the starting of a war-party for Fort Armstrong to attack it, or destroy such of the garrison as they could meet with beyond its palisades; and that of course, our only safety was in making an early start homeward. I inquired whether I could not avoid the Indians by crossing the Great Prairie, and thus striking the Mississippi above the fort. He answered, that by such a route I would certainly avoid the Indians until I reached the vicinity of the Mississippi; but that we would as certainly perish with the cold, as there was no wood to furnish a fire at night. The mercury in the thermometer, as I well knew, had stood at five degrees *below* zero when I left the garrison, and it had certainly been growing colder each day; and therefore I apparently acquiesced in his advice, and requested to be called some three hours before daylight, which would give us a fair start of any pursuing party—and bade him good-night.

But the old man doubted my intention to return to the fort; and shortly after, paid us another visit, accompanied by a very old *Winebago*, who avowed himself the firm friend of the whites, and proceeded to point out the folly of any attempt to proceed in my expedition. He inquired its purport; and when I told him that it was to visit a dying friend, he said I had better postpone the meeting until after death, when we would doubtless meet in the Paradise of the white man! but at the same time gave me to understand that he did not believe such was the object of my visit to the banks of the Mississippi. Indian-like, he sought not to pry farther into my affairs, but expressed his respect for all who knew how to keep to themselves their own counsels and the counsels of their government. His remarks were kind, and in the nature of approbation for the past and advice for the future; and coming from such a source, made a lasting impression.

Again we were left to ourselves; and then, doubtless, I wished myself safe in garrison. But to return, and that too, from *fear*, and the object of my journey unaccomplished, was inevitable *disgrace*. But what was still more important, was the *consequence* to others of my return. I could not but think there was an understanding between the *Winebagoes* and the *Sioux;* and if there had lingered on my mind a doubt of the story of the Potawatomie chief, that doubt was now at an end; and of course, a sense of duty to a whole regiment of officers and men, their wives and children, was as imperative in requiring my advance, as was the fear of disgrace in forbidding my return. With two such motives for a right decision, there could be no doubt as to my course. It required more courage to retreat than to advance; and I determined upon the latter.

Some hours before the dawn of day, we started, apparently for garrison; but once out of sight of old *La Saller*, we knocked the shoes off our horses to avoid being traced by them in crossing the river, threw away our caps, tore up a blanket to make the hood worn by Indians in extreme cold weather, and took a course by the stars directly west. I should have mentioned, that my Indian now having become valueless, I urged his return to his own tribe. But neither persuasion nor threats, could induce him to go. In every bush he imagined he saw a *Winebago*, and he dared not return alone. I then urged what was quite apparent would be the fact—that he could not sustain the *forced march* to which we were destined, and upon which our safety depended. But it was all in vain; and I was compelled to take him with us.

And now, after this long introduction, I come to the point of my story. The second day after leaving Rock River was the coldest I ever experienced. The ground was covered with about eight inches of snow; and no one who has not experienced it, can well imagine with what piercing effect the wind passes over those boundless fields of snow, unbroken by a single tree. On that day, at Fort Armstrong, sixty miles south of me and sheltered by woods, I afterward ascertained that the mercury never rose above fourteen degrees *below* zero! How cold it was where we were, it is impossible to conjecture; but I know that when my Indian failed in strength, and absolutely refused to take his turn in riding the horse to break a trail through the snow, I rode his tour of ten minutes in addition to my own; and when I got down, discovered that my feet, face, hands, and knees, were frozen!

To encamp without wood was an impossibility. The country is a high, rolling prairie; and from a naked hill, about five o'clock in the afternoon, I discovered an *island* of woods lying southwest of us, and distant some ten miles. When the Indian saw the distance yet to travel, the hope with which I had all along cheered him, failed, and he announced his utter inability to proceed. To place him on our horse was certain death to him; to remain with him in the prairie, without wood, and consequently without fire, was as certain death to all; yet he begged most piteously that we would not abandon him! He was but a boy; and although, even at that age, he might have met death at the stake with all an Indian's coolness, he could not make up his mind to a death from fatigue and cold. I reasoned with him upon the folly of all perishing in an idle attempt to save one, pointed out the wood to him, promised him to build up a large fire to guide him to us as soon as we reached it, and with a heavy heart took leave of him, with but little expectation of seeing him again.

Night set in shortly after we separated, and not a solitary star was visible; but our course to the wood lying southwest, and the wind blowing cuttingly severe from the northwest, there was but little difficulty in keeping on our way. In about an hour the wind lulled; and then we felt the awkwardness of our position. On a trackless prairie covered with snow—without trail, moon, star, or wood—what evidence did we possess that we were going in the direction we desired! The reflection was not a comfortable one; but we knew the worst of our position. We could but wander at random all night on the prairie, and find our way to shelter in the morning; but not so our poor Indian; and with the lulling of the wind, the last gleam of hope for him, was necessarily abandoned.

This calm may have continued nearly two hours, when again the wind rose; but instead of blowing upon our right cheeks, it struck us upon the left. That the weather had not moderated, we had too much reason to believe; and consequently, we came to a halt, lighted our *spunk*, held it to my pocket compass—and behold, we were traveling *northeast*, or directly from, instead of to, our haven of rest! This created no surprise; though of course, we were not particularly pleased to discover that we had lost so much time on such a night, in the wilderness of prairie with which we were surrounded; but life in the wilderness is a life of action. We promptly resumed our march in the proper direction, with the wind a certain guide, if it did not again lull. And now comes the wonder. In less than half an hour we overtook our Indian, traveling leisurely in the same direction as ourselves! Never before nor since, have I been so surprised. My first salutation was, "Where are you going?" He answered, "To the woods." "And how do you know that you are going to the woods?" He could not tell how or why he knew he was right, but he was certain—had not a doubt! I then undertook to question him more closely, but it was of no avail. He knew not why it was, but he was as perfectly certain that he was traveling in the right direction, as if it had been broad daylight, and the wood directly in view. He had traveled slow. was somewhat refreshed, and we all traveled leisurely until about ten o'clock at night, when we reached our anxiously-sought wood, built a fire, scraped away the snow for a couch, and slept, as only travelers under such circumstances can sleep.

Now comes the question, and it is one which has bothered me for twenty-four years—how did the Indian avoid losing his way? Why was he confident that he was going directly to his place of destination? My sergeant, an old woodsman, and myself, had made use of all our experience, judgment, and intellects, to keep in the right direction, but had failed—had wandered no one can tell where; and yet this child of the forest, without a trail, in a dark night—without a moon, star, or wind to guide him, and quite ten miles from the wood—had never for a moment doubted that he was in the right direction; in short, *knew* that he was; and the result demonstrated his *knowledge!* Whence came this knowledge? Was it instinct? or was he indebted for his knowledge and safety, to his keener sense of *smelling?*

You once said to me, that a critical examination of Indian skulls had led a friend to believe, that the orifice through which the olfactory nerve passes, is larger than in the white man;

that the eye is set differently, so that he may see farther behind him than civilized man; and that the passage for admitting sound into the head is larger. If this be so, the secret of my Indian's knowledge is at once developed; and we can not but be struck by the wonderful and inscrutable provisions of a kind Providence for all his creatures, in whatever condition in life they may be placed. That man in a civilized state does not require so perfect a use of all his senses as in a state of nature, is very evident; and although the Almighty may have formed us all alike, it is not impossible that civilized man has lost—because, in his artificial state, no longer necessary for his safety—much of his delicacy of smell, power of vision, and acuteness of hearing; while the Indian, dependant upon those senses for safety and subsistence, has not only retained them in all their original perfection, but by constant exercise, increased their powers beyond our comprehension of what is possible. Such at least, is the theory I have adopted to explain the incident related.

In regard to the result of my expedition, I ought to add, that most providentially, we reached Fort Armstrong without meeting with an Indian, or approaching sufficiently near to one to be recognized as whites, although we passed for miles (unconsciously) through woods filled with them, and were informed, on reaching the fort, that for some weeks the main land had not been visited unless accompanied by a strong guard. My dispatches were forwarded to the Falls of St. Anthony by soldiers, who traveled all the way on the frozen Mississippi; and fortunately, when they were received, a number of *Sioux* chiefs were about the garrison. They were immediately placed in the guard-house, and others sent for and served in like manner; and none of them were released until after the opening of spring, and satisfactory proofs that the proposed rising had been finally abandoned, as equally dangerous and hopeless.

I had intended to imbody in this hasty dedication a variety of interesting anecdotes of our Indians, which, in my judgment, would tend to give a more correct opinion of the leading characteristics of the race; but unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately for the reader, I reserved for this purpose but twenty-two pages. They are already consumed in the incidents I have related, so much longer than I intended they should be, and which I have neither time nor inclination to make shorter by re-writing; and in the mean time the book is printed, and only waits my filling up the allotted pages, to be thrown before the public. I may not therefore, trespass further upon the reader, because it would also be trespassing upon my friendly and much-esteemed publishers; and I must content myself with a promise, made with due reservations, that at some future time I will write a book, instead of a mere dedication, on this very interesting subject. The truth is, limited as is the space I have reserved to myself, other avocations have induced me to delay occupying it, until the cry of "haste" is gently whispered in my ear; and what I have written, comes before the public after the fashion of an every-day editorial in the Courier and Enquirer.

That this tale of Indian life, may meet your approbation, is my earnest wish; not only because I shall then be proud of having paid you an acceptable tribute of friendship, but because such approval, will be a guarantee to the public that it is faithful to nature and learned in woodcraft; in which case I venture to promise another edition, with the beautiful illustrations, sketched from nature, which, but for the untimely death of our friend INMAN, would have rendered these volumes far more attractive.

Believe me, my dear sir, with sentiments of respect and esteem, not only an admirer of your numerous literary productions, but

Your sincere friend,

J. WATSON WEBB.

New York, July, 1846.

ALTOWAN.

CHAPTER I.

On an evening near the close of April, 183–, a boat having the appearance of a man-of-war's gig, under the care of a single seaman, was dancing on the gentle swell that agitated the waters of New York Bay, where the Castle, as it is called, rears its shapeless mass. The trees on the adjoining promenade, known as the Battery, and so called, probably, from the military work alluded to, already indicated the presence of spring, which has charms in that land that are found nowhere else. The moon had risen; and, being on the south of the Castle, the boat already mentioned, was easily visible to any one who might look over the rail that bounds the promenade. Two or three sailors seemed lounging in different directions; and stretched upon one of the stone seats, there lay a man who was, or seemed to be, weary or asleep. His repose, however. was now in some degree interrupted by the appearance of a person whose dress was that of a sailor. His air, somewhat ruffled, might indicate to an accurate observer that he had a will of his own, and that it had been in some degree thwarted. A free step, an elevated port, and an impatient gesture, were all signs that he did not pull the laboring oar in the boat, to which, from his dress, he seemed to belong; and having discovered where she lay, and hailed her, a small whistle brought from various directions eight or ten of her crew. In a few minutes the gig was under way across the bay; the youth before alluded to, lying listlessly in the stern sheets; and the sleeper of the shore, after a moment's survey of the surrounding scene, taking his way up Broadway. Numerous vessels, of all sizes, were anchored in various parts of the bay; and one United States frigate, whose tall masts invaded the blue sky, lay in stern repose, as if mistress of an anchorage where the Navies of the world might ride in safety. The boat held on her way until a hail from a vessel not far off, broke a silence which seemed natural to the crew, and in keeping with the scene. The vessel, the side of which the youth we have alluded to, was now mounting, was a large corvette, well armed, and of beautiful symmetry. The appearance upon deck of her crew and one or two of the officers, gave token of some interest felt for the return of the boat; and the salute which the new-comer paid to the deck on coming aboard, was respectfully returned, while one or two approached him as if expecting news. All conversation was, however, checked by a gesture on the part of a person who had just appeared on deck, pointing to the stair leading to the after cabin. For some time previous, that cabin had been paced with an air of impatience, by a man of middle height and imposing mien—his countenance wearing the appearance more of care than of age. The knowledge that the boat was alongside, had effaced all signs of any interest he might have felt in what was going on; and when an attendant appeared, he was found seated on one of the ottomans, whose crimson cushions upon every side of the apartment, invited repose. The youth, who was now ushered into the cabin, did not appear to be more than nineteen years of age. His hair was light brown, and being worn in profusion, threw a shade over his pale, but noble features; his eyes were large, and of that deep blue which in many lights, appears jet black; their long eyelashes and arched eyebrows, were darker than the curls that he pushed aside as he sat down and regarded his father. His form, which a light tight jacket exhibited to exactness, was not remarkable for its breadth; but the large white wrist, thick, though narrow hand, and long fingers, gave indication of a strength which the slight, but beautiful proportions of the figure, did not lead the beholder to expect. The conversation was long; and appeared to be a series of instructions on the part of the senior, only interrupted by questions for explanations on the part of the younger. They were given in a low and calm tone; but he who listened to them, well knew that a spirit like a volcano lurked beneath, and the interest thrown into his countenance or really felt, was strongly contrasted with the languid indifference with which those instructions were given. A Greek slave supplied a pipe, which occasioned a break and hesitation in his speech, and the derangement of a cushion gave an uneasiness which it was difficult to account for; but though thus checked, there was a low intonation in his words which the hearer noted well.

The conference, like all others, had its end; the elder rose, and in the embrace which he gave his son there was nothing wanting in the forms, at least, of fond affection. A brief greeting and some few directions, were all that passed on the deck between the loiterers there and him who now hurried again over the evening wave. The backs of the rowers bent, the light glanced from the oar-blades, and the well-fitted row-lock hardly marked the sound of their strokes. But another had been added to the boat's freight, who sat unmoved and unmoving beside the first. The snows of thirty winters might have passed over a head on whose front nothing seemed long to make impression, and whose prevailing expression partook equally of stupidity and care. A figure tending to obesity, gave token of considerable strength; and a constrained position was but little in keeping with the silent ease with which the graceful little vessel glided over the bay. Instead of landing under the wall, where she had two hours previously been moored, her course was considerably altered to the right. The city, with its tall spires, and at this point surrounded with masts, lay before,—the Battery promenade, forming the terminus of a narrow isle on which it is built, rising as if spontaneously from the sea, its shadows deepened in the waters, and numerous lights prolonged upon the waves. Having rounded the custom-house station, and two or three wooden wharves, the boat was brought to at a landing, and the youth and his less active companion, leaped up on the quay. For one moment he turned and hesitated in answer to the upturned look that was thrown on him by the crew. It was one of sadness and of silent farewell to him whom they seemed conscious they were about to lose. The youth's hesitation was but momentary; and his companion, who, calculating on his general rate of movement, had considered it well to lay out his best speed, was easily overtaken without having remarked the delay. The street up which these two pursued their way, running at right angles to Broadway, was neither long nor steep; but there had been a shorter and more agreeable route round the Battery, had they landed at one of the wharves below. On gaining the main street, they were met, however, by one of their own crew, accompanied by a man who seemed to point out the way. After a momentary pause, the guide had disappeared, and the boy stood embarrassed before his scarcely older superior. A few words explained that the wishes of this boy had led him to follow, and they seemed to meet with but slight opposition. In such a situation let us leave them, and move to another, and a distant scene.

CHAPTER II.

It was on the western side of that range, emphatically called the Rocky Mountains, that two men might have been seen, between Jackson's Hole, which discharges its waters into the Columbia, and the Susquadee, which flows into the Gulf of California. They had descended from the mountain to the lower prairie, through which the latter river flows, and were cautiously skirting, or rather, keeping out of gun-shot of the low thickets of willow that marked the course of the stream. Two horses, one led by each, without saddles, were their only companions; and, save when the prairie cock (a large species of grouse, of a pepper-and-salt colour, and long, pointed tail), from which the river takes its Indian name, rose at their feet, there was nothing to interrupt the stillness of the scene. The evening was fading; and the universal calm, the open solitude around, the gigantic range of mountains in front —might have furnished for the poet and the painter, admirable subjects for their finest productions. An indefinite, but not insensible awe, creeps over one whose uncertain way lies through these dreary wastes; and although the ever-present dangers of these regions, may confine his thoughts to the immediate objects around, there is yet a strong impulse felt to wander still farther, and to plunge still deeper into the unknown wilds of these Western woods.

The travelers had musingly advanced toward a point where the river approaches some heights, and where a few larger cotton-wood trees mark, if they do not adorn, its course. The heights are upon its left bank, and consequently on the left of our travelers; and the plain extends to another creek, as it is called, on the right, which, on its part, bounds the flat over which we are advancing. Having stopped for a momentary contemplation of the scene, the two turned their horses short to the left, and gained the stream where it has but a slight fringe of brushwood, and where they might enter behind the larger mass which spreads below. The sun had well-nigh sunk below the horizon, and its lingering rays ruddied the snows on *the Mountains of the Wind*, as this part of the range is called, which, for a distance of sixty miles, extends its fantastic peaks toward the skies. Having carefully noted the sandy paths which intersect the sage-bushes,* to discover any marks of man or animal which might interest them, the river bank was gained, and a pause ensued, in which there appeared a doubt whether to cross the rapid stream or to prolong their way down its bank. The latter course was determined upon; and they entered the thicket, which extended in various branches, where parts of the water had once flowed, leaving spaces of green turf between, marked by the camps of whites, as was indicated by the withered boughs which had formed their huts, and the shreds of cloth which the grass had not yet overgrown. Guiding their course by these *slews*, as they are called, they again touched upon the river bank, where willows of a larger growth, interspersed with cotton-wood, choked up the way, and together with the fallen timber which encumbered the ground, rendered it a matter of difficulty to proceed. Notwithstanding the care with which their route had been examined since entering the thickets, nothing had been discovered to arrest or accelerate their movements; and the deepening shadows and the wants of their animals, determined therefore, their halting at the lower point of a small semicircular opening, which began and ended at the river bank, furnishing at once both grass and a shelter. Silently the saddles were laid aside, and a few dried sticks hastily gathered. The fire, before which were placed for cooking, two buffalo tongues and a piece of meat stuck on small sticks, began to crackle, and the thoughts of the party were soon directed into other channels. One of the two had swam the stream to gain a view of what lay around from the opposite side; and the other, with head depressed and in a meditative posture, sat swinging sadly to and fro, as if keeping time to some unuttered tune, with his legs crossed in the Indian fashion, and his elbows resting on them, and supporting his head, until roused by his companion's return. This youth, for youth he was in years though not in size, appeared, from his speech, to be of Canadian origin; his dress might have been Indian, but his eye was of a clear hazel, and his hair, very thick and very long, being of a glossy auburn, which caught from the rays of light that played upon it, a golden tinge; his stature was above the middling height; his figure appeared to advantage in the tight leggins with fringes and the leather shirt of red. The head was bare, and a small leather band confined the waist, and held the scalping-knife; a long rifle was in his hand, and an arrow case and bow, were laid by the saddle. "There are no buffalo in the plain; they have gone out from water." This sentence, though not unheeded, remained unanswered; but the glance of him to whom it was addressed, was bent calmly on the other, with a look of confidence, and almost affection. "There are bands going out from Horse Creek, and from the river where it cuts the bluffs below." "By the Mad Wolf's camp?" rejoined his companion. "I could not see so far," was the reply. "There is but little light by which to look about these thickets for signs to-night, but I should like to be satisfied that *Parfin* had not been here." This was muttered half in revery, as he rose and strode toward a road the buffalo had made in the willows, worn to a deep trench, and the bushes coated on either side with their wool. By occasional stooping, this might be followed with ease, and any footstep since trodden by them, would have left its trace. The path led out of the thicket to the foot of a bank, the top of which is the general level of the plain; and on the angle where it comes in upon the low willows, were the ruins of a fort built by whites, and a trading-house, still used when they rendezvoused in these parts. The paths appeared —for the trails all centered here—to be free from the print of human or horses' feet, and no sign was stuck upon the dilapidated ruin or the remaining picket of the fort.

---

* A low aromatic shrub, *Herbe de Zacinthe*, according to the Canadians.

After this survey was made, there was nothing left unexamined in the surrounding camping ground that could be construed into signal or mark; and as the darkness gathered deeper around, the fire discovered the two buried in thought—passing the pipe with slight interchange of those ideas with which civilized whites would have solaced so solitary an hour. "These are old pickets," observed the darker of the two, as he glanced toward the horses; "there is no occasion to tie until they wander or we lie down." "I'll see to that," answered the other; "eat—" holding the upright spit, the end of which he planted in the ground between them. They both cut off and ate as they liked, supplying the place of one tongue by the other. After wiping their knives, a few puffs of tobacco closed this informal repast; the fire was extinguished, and the saddles and appichimoes* laid down for a bed. The horses were now tied by one of the travelers, while the other had thrown himself on his rude couch and abandoned himself to sleep. The operation of "tying up," however, had hardly been finished, when they were startled by the loud snort of one of the horses nearest the river, "Pinatsi!" "It is but a wolf," was the answer. "I know not," rejoined the first, "but he is so full of strange ways that it may be him lurking about us. It is now the eighth of June; he had time, and I know must be hereabout; he had better mind, as I am apt to shoot when scared at night," was the reply. They had both lain down—the darker almost forcibly laid the head of Pinatsi on the saddle, who struggled, but finding his long hair held there, suffered himself to be confined to his pillow until sleep took from him all desire to move. The other gazed long upon him with a look in which there was a strange mixture of kindness and doubt. The morning dawn found them quietly asleep, and the saddling and start were performed without incident. Emerging from the thicket and gaining the level of the plain, their trail lay at some little distance from the river; and the view of these mountains covered with perpetual snow—save where their concave sides and pinnacled tops refuse a space for it to lie—was again before them; and the dusty paths—for in this region there is no dew—bore no imprint but that of the buffalo and the wolf. At about two miles below where they slept there is a ford, which their horses crossed with some difficulty. The bluffs a little farther down, turn the course of the Susquadee, which had hitherto been easterly, toward the south; and these bluffs crossed, you fall upon another stream, called "Piny Branch of New Fork." This is a rapid mountain torrent coming from a lake, and the scattered pine trees which fringe its branches give sanction to the name. At a point near where this piny border ends, upon its banks, perhaps two miles from its entering the plain, the travelers again halted, though the sun was not an hour high; and having loosed their horses with trail ropes, suffered them to feed on the abundant grass which the borders of the stream afforded. "We are safe here, and out of sight if we keep within the brush," said the older, breaking silence. His companion, however, was more intent on a herd of buffalo; and had caught up the horse he had hitherto led, which was of that spotted color they call *Cai*. He fixed a cord in his mouth, and taking his rifle in his hand, was about to bound on his steed, when, at the suggestion of his companion, he changed his weapon for the quiver and bow which lay near, and was out of sight in a few moments.

---

* A piece of buffalo fur generally long enough to sleep on, worn folded under the saddle.

There are some gentle swells on the other side of the Cedar Fork, opposite that by which they had arrived; and the hunter had not far to go before he fell in with the herd of buffalo which he had seen in crossing the ridge between the Susquadee and the stream he had just left. Having rounded a little height, he was enabled to approach very near the band; and before they were aware, was almost in their midst. It is a matter of some difficulty, at this season, to find a fat cow; and the rider has to choose quickly or tire his horse; Pinatsi had from his earliest days, been a buffalo runner; and the eye of youth was also an eye of experience. His horse had carried him into the crowd; and before they had separated, a deadly arrow was planted in the side of a cow, which, separating herself from the rest, staggered and fell. The skinning and taking what meat was wanted for two, was not a long, as it is never a safe operation; because a man is then confined to a single spot, and can be approached by a hostile Indian without danger. He had tied what was wanted upon his horse over two branches of sage, which prevented the cord pressing on the back bone, when he perceived a dog of an Indian breed, which the hurry of butchering and its resemblance to a wolf, had prevented him from before remarking. These animals are scarcely ever familiar even in the lodge in which they live, and have a peculiar dislike to a white man. It was, therefore, somewhat singular, that this one should not have kept aloof until the coast was clear. Pinatsi remarked one or two places in which his hair had been singed, which showed a recent contact with the habits of the human race. This incident did not retard his progress, as it gave intimation of the recent proximity of some party to which this dog might have belonged.

On returning to the spot where he had left his companion, he found his own horse gone, with that of the other, and a stick stuck in the ground bent over in a direction up the creek. This he threw down, and striking into the thicket, pursued his way up a *slew* where no trail could be left, and where, in many places, the willows are so thick as to require the strength of a horse to force a passage. Getting thence upon a grassy glade, he proceeded with more speed; and it was not long before he saw a horse where the first range of rough *Butes*, lays a foundation for the stupendous structure above. Through this first step of the mountain, the blue waters of the neighboring lake force a tumultuous course over vast masses of granite, forming for upward of half a mile one continued cataract. At the foot of this, where the waters enter the plain, shaded by the pine and the birch, is a small open spot, where the remains of some Indian forts might still be taken advantage of, for shelter or defense. By the waters, the horses grazing within the shade, sat Pinatsi's former companion and another person, in deep and earnest conversation. *Parfin*—for it was he of whom they spoke the night before—sprung first to his feet upon Pinatsi's appearance. He had more the air of an Indian than the other two. The meat first attracted his attention. After the salute—which the pale face had taught the children of the wilds—had passed between him and the hunter, "I have not eaten since yesterday at sun up," said he to Pinatsi. "We have dry wood enough, and the fattest cow of the year." They were not long in setting the cooking in order; and the fresh green, the shade, the clear pool, and the distant roar of the cataract, had an effect at once refreshing and tranquilizing. "You are long from the village, Altowan?" said Parfin. "Eight days from sun to sun, though I can't say we have traveled fast. Where do you suppose they are now?" "Probably on some of the forks of the Maria. There are war parties out from the Little Robe and the Payans; the Crows are, I hear, down on Tongue River, and the Snakes are over on the Wintey. Unless there may be some diggers in the mountain above, or a war party lying by, we are alone in all this range." "I have seen a dog; but he may belong to some Chochocois,"* rejoined Pinatsi. There was now a pause, which was broken by the rising of Altowan. He stepped out to the open,† and, after a survey, came back. "I must see him, and learn what he wants. There are many whites to the north, and he may have come from some of these, to see where their rendezvous is to be held. We will act according to circumstances, and he need not know me. I am somewhat changed since we parted on the *Arno*, eight years ago!" At this moment, through an open that showed them the côte‡ above, they discovered two buffalo bulls, and heard the report of a gun just as the bulls came tearing down among the huge blocks with which the hill-side is covered. They sprung to their horses; and collecting them, Altowan made a sign to the others to stand close, while he, with swift and stealthy pace, gained the spot where they must descend to the stream. This was the work of a moment. The struggle for life was still kept up, and the animal, dangerous from his state of excitement, and desperate from growing weakness and pain, stood at bay against a mass of granite, which formed almost an alcove. He turned his heavy front and bloodshot eye toward his pursuer. "Shoot well forward," cried Altowan, as the hunter's gun was raised. Whether this was the first intimation of his proximity, or that any voice at such a moment might unsteady the aim, it is hard to say; but the shot was delivered, and struck on the top of the shoulder—the horse still in motion down the steep. The bull sprung at the sound; and the rider, unable to turn, came in a course at right angles to his. Raising the empty fowling-piece, he made an effort to intimidate his wounded antagonist; but death alone can arrest the attack of a bull who finds himself dying and within reach of his mortal foe. The lowered head, the bloody tongue, which the hunter generally avoids—could be hardly remarked, so sudden was the speedy descent of both. But the attempt at intimidation marked the momentary sense of the hunter to his danger. The steed bounded, but too short, and the horn of his adversary had already torn open his bowels; and of the three, the hunter alone arose unhurt. It had been the bull's last effort; and he who had a moment before bestrode one of the best horses of the plains, now stood steedless, with an empty gun, and a stranger before him, with a loaded rifle in his hand. For a moment there was an apparent embarrassment in the manner of the hunter; but it was only for a moment. "You may be a half-breed, and can understand me; if not—" "I am," interrupted the other. "I regret your mishap; I only wish I could restore your horse, and assure you of any aid I can render," said Altowan. This was said in a tone in which there was nothing to be remarked but self-possession. The features of him who spoke partook not of the feelings of kindness which his words imported; and as the two stood gazing upon each other, they presented a strange contrast: the one, of lofty stature and noble proportions, with features of perfect regularity, and eyes in which there was much of that melancholy which creates an interest in the beholder, were there naught else to notice; but here the case was different—the dress, the long black hair, the manner, combined with the suddenness of the contact to inspire surprise and wonder in the hunter; while the other saw a youth, in appearance such as he might expect to see among the whites who yearly assemble in these groves. While of surpassing beauty, and of address at once graceful and proud, in no part of the world is self-possession a more general characteristic than among the wild Indians of these mountains; the nearest approach to which is in the cold and supercilious courtier of England, although the savage is far superior in manly dignity. Here you might suppose the two classes were represented; and the bearing of both was such as if neither would yield to the other, even in a glance. A sudden cracking of the branches behind, however, arrested the attention of both, and they turned their looks upon the intruder. This was no other than Parfin, who had hastened to the scene as soon as the horses were safe. The looks of the two young men were again bent on each other, when he came in sight; and when drawn upon himself, he was enabled to command their attention; for he knew both, and better than they knew themselves. "A good bull," he said: "but we need him not; we have cow meat already cooked, if this affair has not spoiled the roasts. Have you seen no cows?" said he, addressing himself to the young man, who was now reloading his gun. The other regarded him steadily a moment, as if to try to recognize something he knew before. "I have seen some bands below, but having seen also some Indian signs, I followed them up toward the mountain, and coming across this bull, I thought to kill him, as I was not sure of my gun." "Are your band far off?" "Half a day's ride. I left them this morning, before sun-up." "Take the tongue, then, and let us to the fire," said Altowan, as he motioned toward the thicket. Parfin also arose, and following on, they all sat down, while the *pipe*, the emblem of peace, was produced, and its silent rounds precluded farther conversation. The thoughts of all three might be occupied with each other; but the habits of the Indian and the hunter of these parts, are not those of sudden and free communication. At last the young man whom we have just introduced to the reader's notice, broke this silence, by asking if any Indians were expected to the rendezvous of the whites. "Some of the friendly tribes, and a camp of the Snakes, perhaps," was the reply. "Any of the Northwest?" he asked again. "There may be, but the time is yet far off." The roasts had been delivered from the fire, and the occupation of eating was sufficient to conceal the shade of care that might have been observed on the countenance of the inquirer.

---

* Snake Indians, who live on roots, as distinguished from those who hunt the buffalo.

† All openings or natural clearings are called "opens" by the half-breeds of the Indian country.

‡ Small hills. French terms are become vernacular, in many instances, among the trappers.

The meal was from the best part of the best meat in the world; that is, we hold it so. It was from that part of the *fleece* that stretches below the shoulder-blade—tender and juicy. It must be understood that the *fleece* is that part of the meat that lies along the backbone and across the ribs, and fills up the space between. The charms of the best dinner must have their end in satiety; so had this, and the pause gave to *Roallan*—for so the stranger was called—an opportunity of asking if there was any thing with which he could furnish the others, and if they would visit his camp. There seemed to be some hesitation, but it was decided, that having looked after the trail which they expected to find toward the lake, they would rejoin Roallan at his camp at sundown; in the mean time furnishing a horse for his conveyance thither. These arrangements were made entirely by Altowan; and the three might have been seen again winding their way upward along the bank of that rapid stream, while the other pursued his solitary course in an opposite direction down into the plain. The track that led up the stream toward the mountains, whose lofty range rose immediately above, was one seldom trodden by man; and as yet there appeared no mark to indicate that any late intrusion had taken place on these solitary wilds. The ospray was, as usual, hovering near for his finny prey; the eagle might be seen soaring aloft, and the wolf stealing through the sage in search of the young antelope; but the hoarse raven was not there with his ominous voice, noting the presence of recent blood and waste, which generally follow the hunter's track, and invite the bear and vulture to follow in his wake. All was tranquil; and the animals of the wilds seemed to have confidence in man—so little did they know of him in the deep glen and lofty table-ground which the ever-changing forms of the range presented on their upward course. They had now gained a plain of some extent, from the edge of which, "The Blue Lake" might be seen below, hiding its head in a deep and dark mass of shrubbery. Another, to the eastward, under the shade of a mountain of dark pine, lay equally blue and calm; but in the openings that Nature has left in these forest scenes to vary the most beautiful land-scapes in the world, there were no buffalo, and the eye of Altowan at once marked the fact. The plain on which they stood, was not large; and the surrounding pines and quaking ash, formed promontories and bays along its sides. Taking their course to the left, their route cut through several of these points. In one spot the pine leaves were somewhat deranged; and a close examination showed a human track of no ancient date. "Here it is," exclaimed Altowan, as he looked back; "the stranger had seen it plainer in the dust of the prairie, or we would have been with him now. There is water at the head of this glade, and in the bosom of that côte before us is, an opening where there is both grass and concealment. We may find *them* there; but they should have been on the look-out, and ought to have seen us. Ha! mark!" A small curl of smoke rose from a peak in front, or rather, to their right. "Keep within the skirt of the wood," he said, as he advanced at an increased pace, which the thinness of the trees now permitted. They had advanced a few yards and crossed a height where the pines—broad and spreading as they are in spots where they are not too crowded—allowed air for a green turf to grow around them; when, descending a small slope, they came at once in sight of several horses and some Indians seated round a small fire. Their guns were fired off as a signal of confidence on coming in sight; and the other party were hardly aware of their approach before they were quietly seated together and their horses let loose. The recognition between the Indians and those who had just arrived, was such as proved a good understanding, without any show of feeling on either side. The usual pipe was handed, and it had hardly gone round, when the remainder of the party came in from the direction in which they had previously seen the signal smoke.

One of the party who now appeared, who seemed, from his air, to have the command of the rest, after some moments rose and walked up to the horses of Altowan, where the latter joined him. Their discourse seemed to be of some particular interest to both; and while it is going on, we may attempt to describe those whom we have found thus perched, as it were, in air, and *hiding* in that land over which nature seemed to have given them dominion. The men were far above the standard of whites in height; perfect in proportion, and full in muscle. The arm alone, less used to labor, was slighter than the other limbs, though still of sufficient thickness to give the appearance of strength as well as beauty. The chest prominent, the head erect, and the eye elevated—the best models of Greek sculpture had sprung into life in these wilds; and nobleness of expression, freedom of action, and grace of attitude, could be marked in every part of that savage group. They had "the Mountains of the Wind" above their heads, and the sources of the mightiest rivers of the West lay at their feet; their own energies of character, seemed to command the elements of which they were the emblems; and their uncontrolled freedom of motion, spoke a language more convincing than the statutes of a hundred republics. They were of a tribe who knew no master, and obeyed no law; chiefs—hereditary if worthy, or elected—held over them an authority real only as it was supported by courage and wisdom; and the ambition of emulation, bound the warriors and the youths to their command. It was a war party of the greatest of those tribes which inhabit the mountains of the West, and live on the spoils of the chase, that was now before them. The blanket and the buffalo robes were their covering; the moccasons had been thrown off, and the body was otherwise naked but for the *braié* round the loins. They were all armed with guns obtained in trade with the Hudson's Bay Company; but the proportion of horses seemed small to the number of men, of whom there were about twenty. There was a tripod,* on which was hung the skin of a white bison, a bow and quiver ornamented with the plumes of the war eagle, and the medicine pipe. Altowan and the Indian partisan, had now approached, and their conversation had apparently merged into minor details. "Old Montalt," he said, still speaking the Blackfoot language, "is out with the Flatheads, and will be in to trade with the whites next moon. Nothing of theirs has been touched, but their running horses and his long-haired daughter. It was hard upon the young men." A strange change came over the countenance of Altowan, as he listened to this remark—partly uttered as the speaker was in the act of sitting down, as if it was not fully intended to be heard so as to elicit a reply. But that reply came: "She and hers are mine. Of all the horns, and booty, and prisoners, have I taken none? and what have I kept?" If this response did not convince, it silenced. The kindling look was quenched, and the sedate manner of Indian deliberation resumed its place. "Of the camp below you have to learn," Altowan proceeded: "they are rich, and you may trade well; their chief is new from the country of the whites, and his heart is big; he is too strong to be taken; he is from your hunting grounds, and you may get more by good-will than by blows." "We are willing," said the *Elkshead*, for so this partisan was called; "I will speak to the young men." Retiring to the side of the small stream, that would fain have hid its pure course beneath its verdant banks, Altowan disembarrassed himself of such of his attire as did not suit the character of the part he was about to enact. The party whom he had thus met were all painted black, as is usual with warriors on these excursions; but the example of Altowan was soon followed in dress as well as other things; so that the band lost much of that uncouth appearance which they wore at first. And having previously secured a good number of buffalo horses from a party of the Hudson Bay trappers, they mounted a considerable number of hunters; and the order of the day seemed now changed from war to the chase. The few clothes of Altowan and some extra baggage, were given in charge to a handsome youth, who was attached to the service of the rest. Having refused to take part in the warlike feats of the men, he had previously been consigned, under the name of

---

* Tripod, composed of three poles.

Broadashe, to the society, the duties, and the dress of the women. There are youths of this description in every camp, resembling in office the eunuchs of the seraglio. Enjoying the favor of the partisan, Broadashe was a follower, together with two squaws, of this band. The women had the appearance of the men, except in dress and slenderness of form, and a certain softness of feature. There was, however, a stiff and waddling gait discoverable in their motions—the fruits of severe labor, and of early subjection to the will of the men. Of the two women, one was of large proportions and height, but of a pleasing and good-natured expression. She was an *Aurickara*, and had been taken prisoner. The other was a Flathead of smaller size, and some delicacy of feature. They had both been taken in the same affair, together with the horses, and appeared in nowise depressed by their change of situation—their charms being sufficient protection, when, as in this instance, there had been no loss of life in the capture.

The scene was now about to be changed. Two or three had gone ahead; and the remainder, with Altowan and his companion, came together. Their way in descending led them over stony and precipitous ridges, to the waters of an-her stream, issuing from a lake they were leaving to their left. Their course lay to the southst, to avoid a mountain that raised its dark adow between that lake and the mid-day sun. elow, the plain was marked out by the wooded orders of five small rivers, at inconsiderable stances apart; between which, the undulating rairie, stretching as far as the eye can reach. eds many bands of buffalo, who are seldom disrbed until the congregating of whites, in July, this chosen point of meeting. The heat of the ay—for it was high noon—was great, and the alf-naked state of the Indian hunters was well uited to the mildness of the atmosphere. The ng hair floating about, as raised by the motion f tho rider; and the horse-tails dangling, and the ust, and the occasional shout; the flashing of the right gun-barrels in the sun, and the fierce bearng of those who carried them—combined to form subject alike for the painter and the moralist. n the rear of this band, and at some little disance, came those on foot; and with them the Broadashe, the women, and a loaded horse. A ittle to one side rode Altowan, by whom was Pinatai; Parfin was with the partisan. "I must rust to him," said Altowan to his companion; "he has no interested motives—at least, ought to have none—and he alone can explain matters. He must go on." "Oh, Altowan!"—and it was seldom he addressed him by name—"ever since I knew what it was to care for any one, I have loved you, and with no ordinary love; and I believe it makes me clearer-sighted to all that bodes you ill. There are many would pluck the eagle from his lofty place." The other laid his hand on the youth's arm, as he said, "I believe it, I believe it; but there is a desire still lambent here, to take my place whence I have been driven, Pinatsi, in scenes you dream not of; and he alone can, at present, prepare the way." During this short conference, they had approached the subject of their conversation, and at a signal, Parfin was soon at the side of Altowan. "You must precede me to the camp," said the latter, "and see how matters stand." "I would rather be informed, first, who you mean to be there—whether white, or half-breed, or Indian chief?" said the other, with a slight smile. "I would be what I am, Parfin, to him, and let the rest happen as it may." "Would you then, without knowing him, put all this power into the hands of one who is the natural enemy of your rights? Let him proclaim you, if he will, a land pirate, a murderer, a horse thief! That will suit well with those whose fear you would be, and than whom, you are already greater, richer, freer, as you are. Think again! I tell you plainly, I do not want to lose you here; but do not let that impeach what I have said." The bound of Altowan's horse, occasioned by a rattlesnake's spring, woke up the slumbering spirit of the mountain in his breast. "Do then as you will; but let me know how I must be taken; the sun will not be across the Susquadee before we are in the camp." Parfin yielded but a moment to his already impatient horse, and was in a gallop, and soon lost among the small butes that lay in his course, crossed a stream that issued from the second lake, and, ascending the opposite bank, passed over a comparatively smooth country, where the buffalo were congregating to the water-courses, and considerable flocks of antelope were seen scouring the plain, in their winding and unmeaning course. Occasionally one, yielding to a curiosity natural, but often fatal to the race, would come up within twenty yards. Parfin heeded them not. A fresh track of a bear for a moment checked him; it entered the thicket of willows that hides a creek; the rein was again slackened, and he held his onward way.

There is something animating in a gallop, even to the confined citizen, who holds on by the mane of a Sunday, and disputes the way with every pebble in Rotton Row. It is animating, on the foggy shores of England, to ride along the briny beach, to follow the retreating wave, and outstrip the returning surge; but the coal fire in the small room, the boiled fowl with cockle-sauce, bound the hopes of the day. In these high plains, unknown to cloud or damp, the pure air elevates and frees the spirit; the glorious Sun is tempered, and the Indian worships him as the Great Spirit which governs the universe. Here, the horse, which emulates in fire and swiftness the barb, of which he is a legitimate offspring, bounds over the plain—the obstacles in his course unheeded—as if his feelings were more elated in such a scene, and he felt he was stimulating those of his rider. With head erect, he gazed, and would veer toward the nearest buffalo, as he passed through and between the herds that blackened the prairie; but the balance of his rider's body again brought him to his course. It was on the edge of a deep ravine that he now suddenly pulled up. Beneath, lay a narrow valley, where he well remembered having made his first camp with one now far away, when on their journey with Fitzpatrick from rendezvous on a disastrous expedition to the country of the Crows. He descended the steep bank, and stopped a moment on the plain below: but the thoughts of the past had no farther power over the present, and he was in a moment urging his horse through the deep stream that invited his thirst in vain. Another half hour, and the horses of Roallan's camp dotted the green valley; where, in a more open and extended plain, another fork took a winding course. In the calm air, the camp smoke rose high, and a universal stillness seemed to prevail. The baggage was piled round the angle of the stream where it runs against a considerable bute; and the white tents concealed, if they did not shelter, the men.

However quiet a camp may be, there are always stragglers on the look-out; and Parfin's approach had been noticed by one of these. From his Indian dress and appearance, he was hailed as the forerunner of an Indian village; and it was somewhat absurd to see the gestures which were meant to communicate with him on the part of the camp-follower, out of breath with curiosity; for he had not moved ten steps. Twisting a countenance, at best but unmeaning, into such shapes as he thought most suited to the operation of his hands and arms, he produced some of the most extraordinary combinations of gesticulations, interspersed with Romaic exclamations, of which the human form is capable. But all this was hardly changed for the better, nor was his astonishment lessened, when Parfin answered him in *Italian* that he wished to see Mr. Roallan. In silent astonishment, he turned to conduct the inquirer to a lodge which looked upon the water, and was backed by a thicket of willow.

Reader, you have perhaps never seen a caravan of Rocky Mountain traders; for this camp was made up of the same materials, and conducted in the same manner. The event of a strange arrival had summoned its dead to life; and that curiosity, which, under other circumstances, would have been ill-bred, was here palliated, if not justified, by the relation in which man stands to man; where they all form, each for the other, a mutual support. The classes of people of whom these parties are composed, are the idle and adventurous among the Americans, and the hereditary *voyageurs* among the French; who, of Canadian origin, have emerged from the seigneuries and snows of the North, to a less rigorous climate, if not to milder laws. The appearance, not less than the language, of the *voyageurs*, distinguishes them from the others; and their aptitude for the uncertain life of a trapper of the Rocky Mountains, is conspicuous, even in their first essay. As they continue to reside with, they acquire the habits of the Indians. Many go through all the vicissitudes of fortune, bringing up families to follow as they have gone before, growing thinner and more wrinkled as they advance in the vale of years—until at last they are supposed to vanish into thin air, as no one knows of their deaths, and no gray moss covers their graves.

The lodge into which Parfin was about to be introduced, stood, as we have said, on the margin of the water, and a little apart from those which formed the line around the central space, where the horses were tied to pickets during the night. There was some short pause before a ruddy youth with curly hair, who had been applied to, reappeared, throwing open the lodge door. The apartment they now entered was large, and hung round with scarlet cloth, raised up below for the admission of air: the floor was of carpet, and the skins of the tiger and leopard lay by robes of the bison and the elk* in confused heaps;

---

* The great Wapati deer is universally called the elk in the United States, as the bison is called the buffalo.

arms of various sorts were attached to the poles that supported the roof, and a small chafing-dish stood in the middle, on which a few pieces of charcoal served to light a pipe or burn perfumes. Wrapped in a cloak, Roallan had thrown himself on a pile of skins; fatigue from the morning's ride and ennui, had shared their dominion over him. He had just been aroused from sleep, that usual refuge to the weary, which comes unwooed in these climes. Pointing to a robe spread with some care at the back of the lodge opposite the door, he said, "We have traveled hard, Mr. Parfin, and are here three weeks too soon, I understand, as my object was to meet some of the traders of the Hudson's Bay Company." "You will not be the less sure to meet them for being early, and all we have to do is to get round the mountain on the Wind River and lay by. We will make tired horses to their hunters if we remain here." "Well, perhaps—is it far?" "About opposite here on the other side; but we must go round the mountain. The *Argali* have enough to do to cross between these pinnacles." Roallan, turning himself abruptly, now asked if he had not been mistaken in thinking Altowan was an Indian; and was informed that he was a half-breed, and one of the most powerful chiefs of the Blackfeet; that he was now with a party, the trail of which he (Roallan) had seen; and that they meant to stay with his camp some days. "I am told," said Roallan, after a pause, "that they are a dangerous and a subtle tribe; but perhaps I am speaking to one connected with them?" "I am connected with none. I am a wanderer," was the gloomy reply. "When shall we have any thing to eat, Mr. Stay," said Roallan. "But are your friends far off?" he rejoined, recollecting himself. "I should think not," was Parfin's reply, pointing to a streak of light which shone through a crevice over the aperture which served as a door; and, in fact, the discharge of several guns confirmed the assertion.

They issued from the lodge, Roallan feeling a real interest, however concealed, in meeting those celebrated warriors. They were yet at some distance; and every moment there shot from the group one or two horsemen, whose swift and circling career, was accompanied by shouts and the discharge of arms, as if in alternate combat and pursuit. Sometimes dashing up toward the camp, their bodies concealed by hanging on the opposite side of the horse, they would beat as a vessel against the wind, and, equally sheltered, approach on the other tack. The raw heroes of the camp, ran to their arms; and a few, who had the experience of a former campaign, ran to collect the horses. One American of the West, whose tall and muscular form, long hair, and eagle eye, would show him a free man among the free, raised the ever-ready rifle; and the deliberate aim which he took at one of the Indians, whose gestures of defiance and savage yells were conspicuous above the rest, must have been fatal, had not Roallan laid his hand on his arm. "Mind this, captain," said he, "you've spoilt an aim that wouldn't a'gone for nothing. I wouldn't have troubled myself with another." "Henry," said he, smiling, "I ought to have told you they come in friendship." "I never expect much good at their hands, and have always an itching to have a crack at them," was the reply.

Joe Henry was of Kentucky descent, and born in one of the remotest counties of Missouri. His father owning slaves sufficient for the cultivation of his farm, his family had no expense but that of such clothes as were beyond the cunning of the female part of the household. They were too manly, however, and too independent, to waste much upon such articles; and a good horse and stalwart form, set off the home-made suit to more advantage, when they did visit a neighboring town, than the best broad-cloth could its more artificial inhabitants. The black bear was becoming extinct in the woods, and the deer were rare and wild; and Joe had decided to follow the band of Roallan. There was no one in the camp that would or could do more effective service; but he would not be commanded; that is, he would not brook the tone of a master to be used toward him. Generally employed in hunting, he was often the companion of his captain; and there seemed to be an affinity between them of which they were hardly themselves aware; hence, any moment of emergency or interest found Henry by the side of Roallan. The long evenings of a weary day were often passed by him in listening to the details of foreign travel and adventure he elicited from his companion; and his baggage and his horses, were at night, close by Roallan's lodge.

The main body of the Indians had now come up, and Altowan and the partisan entered the lodge. The remainder, having squatted in a circle, began the preparations for smoking. Leaving them thus, we must again shift the scene.

CHAPTER III.

Ham's Fork is a winding stream, which falls into the Susquadee some hundred and fifty miles below the point where the opening scene of the last chapter is laid. Thickets of willow, and a narrow, grassy vale, offer convenient camping ground; and it derives security from the fact that it is not the resort of war parties which may chance to pass that way. Moving from the Snake River, or the Flathead country, toward the general rendezvous of the whites, there is nothing to attract the eye but the low *cotes* bounding the vale; and but for the deep paths which the buffalo have worn in their sides, the whole would seem to be a wild, untrodden region. At the period of which we write, there was no buffalo on the river; and the frequent traces of bones overgrown with grass, of huts, and pickets, and fires, gave a sad appearance of desolation and change, to what had evidently once been the scene of crowded camps and animated life. It was near a part of this stream, which approaches within a short ride of the Susquadee, that an elderly man was seated in a small open, concealed by surrounding willows from all but the light of heaven. By him were two horses, tied to pickets. There was before him sufficient remains of fire to enable him to keep lighted a short pipe, in which he continually scooped up ashes for that purpose. An appearance of care, and perhaps of poverty, was observable in his air; and the bark of the alder, which he was now scraping to replenish his pipe, evinced the want of tobacco—a privation which is often more distressing than more serious want. The horses, apparently full, were standing with a drowsy air. Although the marks of sweat had dried upon them, it was evident they had but halted from recent toil; and even their present repose was speedily to be interrupted, as one of them cocked his ears in the attitude of listening. The old man was on his feet in a moment. Bending below the surrounding bushes, he crept for some yards, until he gained the outer edge, where he could have a view of whatever was passing. He had not remained long, when he distinctly heard, with trembling eagerness, the sound of hoofs upon the hard ground. "I have not wandered so long in these wilds as to be beat by a boy," he muttered, as he examined the lock of his gun. In a moment, as they turned a projecting bush, two figures on horseback were close upon him—the one a youth, and the other a female, whose head, however, was so wrapped up in a large handkerchief as to conceal her features. "We will stop below, at the bend," said the former, and the old man's gun was lowered; "the horses are tired enough." This met with neither notice nor remark from his companion, and they passed on. "Keep out of the trail," repeated the young man, as the female struck into a beaten path, where she left the traces of her horse's feet. He entered the path where she left it, and coming back, left the latter track to counteract the first. As he turned for this purpose, his full front was exposed to the rifle that had once already been leveled at his heart. It was raised again; but another form ranged so as to unsteady the aim; and wheeling immediately, to regain his place by his female companion, they went on to the next point, where they dismounted. Lying down, with her head against the root of a sturdy tree, the female apparently gave herself up to a feeling of despair; and traces of recent tears and impressions of distress, were strongly visible both in her gesture and appearance.

The young man, after busying himself with the horses and securing them, addressed himself again to her who lay listless and inactive. "Idalie, will nothing induce you to listen to me? There is no one in the mountain loves you better. There is—I have told you, and you know it—no one before me in beaver-hunting; I have credit on the books for six hundred gourds,* and I have a friend who will make me rich, if I but name the want. I have four good horses and those mules. Who has meat when I have not? and what is there in these wide plains that you can desire that I will not procure for you?" "I desire nothing but to return to my father," she said, without raising her eyes to that countenance that gazed upon her. "Idalie, if, as you have said, I drank the poison from a glance which was not meant for encouragement; if, as you say, the many signs I took and believed true, which led me on to that hope which has turned my brain and sickened my heart, were the ebullition of friendly interest alone, why not extend it farther? why not try me? Nay, do not interrupt," seeing she was about to speak. "Look yonder to the Ute Mountain; I know spots there, where the foot of man has never trod; let us live there, until time shall show how every thought of my life will be to make you happy." "I can not let you go on, Auguste, under the hope you fain would cherish; nor is the outrage you have committed of a nature to warm a heart toward you. Have you not, by false pretense, got me into your power; and by force carried me off? and what have I now to expect but brutal violence? And have I no wrongs at your hands?" "What animal is there who is not wild under his passion? and can you, who have caused it, judge me harshly?" And there was a fire in his eye that she had known and dreaded before, and hers dropped under it.

---

* Dollars.

He was standing before her; there was but a momentary pause; the report of a gun and the fall of Auguste upon her, were the events of a moment; the next, her father had rushed from the thicket and torn the wounded youth from his daughter's arms. His enfeebled grasp would fain have detained a hold; but the rage of the old man had not yet cooled, and he felt instinctively for his knife. His daughter had, however, now recovered the first shock of surprise and agitation, and interposed. "My father, you have done enough," said she, as she raised Auguste's head to prevent his choking. He manifested a desire to speak; and beckoning her head nearer his own, that she might hear the words which his remaining strength enabled him but feebly to utter, "Idalie," he said, "if you will let me but lay my head on your bosom, I will bless even death there;" and she gently gave him that last support. "I believe my spirit is already where more is known than we know here," he continued, "and I can tell that you—" and his voice sunk inaudible to all but her on whose ear it fell. But few words passed, and he tried to turn his eyes upon hers; but the effort was unavailing, and the settled languor of death crept over a countenance but a moment before beaming with the fiercest passion of impetuous youth.

She scarcely knew he was dead till the old man made her a sign to that effect. He had looked calmly on his work, reloaded his rifle, and resting it against a branch, spread out a blanket. He then took up the body and laid it out; and whatever his thoughts might have been, he gave them no expression. The father's countenance bespoke now no exultation; and his daughter's showed no grief. Old Mont[illegible]—for it was he—now brought two heavy stones, which he laid on the blanket, one at the head and the other at the feet of the body, and lapping it over, and fastening it with wooden pins and a cord of buffalo skins, he dragged the remains to the edge of a deep pool, where the stream had undermined the bank. Laying it along the brink, one roll turned it over, and it sunk to the bed of the stream. "Come, catch up, my child; we must go from here." They turned the two horses of Auguste loose, hid his saddle, and mounting those already mentioned as belonging to Montalt, moved down the stream at a brisk pace. There were many reasons for Montalt taking this course, which was the contrary one to that by which he had left the camp, in preference to returning to it. He knew that there were Indians on the heads of Smith's Fork; he knew that he might have to follow the trail of his party, which is always dangerous; and he feared to be questioned on his return to the camp, where Auguste had left many friends. He had thus proceeded some distance, when he came to a hard, gravelly bank, where water-courses, now dry, had washed away the soil and left bare the rock. Up one of these he pursued his way in a direction toward the river.

There is not much difficulty in traveling on a clear night, when the road is known; and there was scarcely a spot between these waters unknown to Montalt. He had, therefore, no hesitation as to the course he should pursue. They held on in silence, both occupied, and neither with very pleasant thoughts. The pointers had got round half a quarter of a circle by the time they came upon the river bank. To their right, a perpendicular bluff threw a dark shadow on the water. The descent of the upper end was easy; and a grove of cotton-wood—in times of freshet an island—stretched nearly a mile above. Into this, through a slew neither wide nor deep, they proceeded to find shelter and repose. The grass beneath the lofty grove had been untouched, and it was not difficult to perceive that the horses smelt its freshness, and by their neighing, showed a disposition to stop; but Montalt, from some feeling of fear or caution, between which it is difficult, under certain circumstances, to draw the line, muttering something about the depth of the current, took the ford. His horse breasted the stream gallantly, and though it was deep and rapid, was making a good course. Idalie followed; and they had passed through three quarters of its breadth, when Montalt found the heaviest part of the river was yet before them, and that he must turn up sharp to the left, to search for a shoal. They were on the edge of the current, which swept by them swift and strong on their right; and as they were on a raised and shallow shelf, it required an eye practiced to these streams, to distinguish the shallow places from the deep, in the uncertain light by which they had to make their way. It was at this time that Idalie had dropped a few yards behind, from the slowness or weakness of her horse, and she had not noted her father's careful and winding course, when a sudden plunge immersed her in the water, and she found herself drifting, her head often below the surface of the water, being yet entangled in her saddle. Luckily, however, she was able to throw herself off the horse as he sunk, and was rolled over by the strength of the stream.

The swiftness of the current had now taken her some distance down; and her weakened cry for assistance, was lost in the splashing of the water. In the confusion of the moment, her feeling was to struggle for a landing; but drift-wood at one time caught her head, while the under current carried her down; and when she regained her senses, the conviction that it was necessary to keep clear of such dangers, prompted her, with the presence of mind a child of the forest ever exhibits, to float in the middle of the stream until she could see a clear place whereon to land. This was effected about a quarter of a mile below the spot where she was separated from her father. He, trusting to her following close, and keeping his eye on the ripple which served to guide his way, had proceeded up the stream nearly four hundred yards before he found it safe to cross its neck. He had once or twice addressed his daughter to caution her, and thought the noise of the water could account for not hearing a reply; and, as his progress was slow, it was some time after she had got ashore before he missed her. It would be difficult to describe the feelings which then took possession of him, and the bereft and bewildered look with which he gazed down the river, until a thought struck him that she might have landed lower down. He urged his horse along the bank, and got off to examine every object he could perceive upon the brink of the stream. His search, however, was fruitless; and he again mounted and pursued his course on the shore. On seeing the drift-wood, in which, in fact, she had been entangled, it appeared to him now evident that some accident had occurred to her; and he galloped down the bank with his eye fixed on the water.

Idalie, on getting to the shore and recovering her breath, proceeded up the bank to regain her horse, where she supposed he had landed, and took a path which led behind some bushes, and perceived him not very far off, but at some distance from the river. He was walking on, and lowering his head occasionally, as if following some track. She followed; and the cord being now loose and trailing, it was not difficult to catch him. She found that her only loss was her blanket. Mounting, her next object was to find her father, who, she concluded, must be near; and she turned to search the river bank where she supposed he had landed, and where she found the wet on the gravel, and the fresh foot-mark of the horse where he had mounted the bank. Not having met him on the way, she had no doubt of his having proceeded upward. It being impossible to follow the trail, she resolved to ascend the river till she could see the fire she conjectured he had gone on to light; and putting her horse into a gallop, partly from impatience, and partly from a feeling of cold, she had proceeded some considerable distance, anxiously looking about her, when she perceived, not far ahead, the light she so much desired. She did not for a moment doubt that it was a fire made by Montalt; but if she had considered the matter, or thought of the short time he could have preceded her, she might have known that the steady glare which she saw, and which shed a ruddy gleam on the surrounding wood, could not have been lit by her father. A few willows were between her and the fire; but, on the other side, there was nothing but the stems of the lighted grove. Rounding the intervening screen, she was at once by the side, not of old Montalt, but of a tall figure, with whose countenance, as he looked up with some surprise, she was totally unacquainted. There was a moment of embarrassment, during which she had almost turned her horse, when the fear which prompted flight gave way before the instinctive confidence which that countenance inspired; and she inquired if the stranger had seen her father. There was something romantic in the scene, even in a country where events run not always in a wonted course.

In the prairie, at night and alone, where the thoughts wander after the forms of well-remembered or ideal beauty, and all that remains to be wished is some object to love, as if at the bidding of the wildest desire of the heart, there appears at once an object of beauty and of love. It is not to be wondered, then, that the answer was for a moment delayed in the survey of her who asked the question. The desolate look of Idalie on hearing no tidings, where she had so surely expected to meet her father, brought under his observation her apparently forlorn condition; and he asked her if she would not dry herself at the fire while she waited, assuring her, that if her father was in the vicinity, the light would naturally attract him. After a moment's hesitation, she got off her horse, and approached the blazing fire, on which Henry (for it was he) piled additional fuel; and as it threw ahead a stronger light, Idalie perceived that there was still another figure to complete the group; for Roallan, leaning on his elbow, surveyed, as if in a dream, the figure which the light so plainly showed to his sight, but could not explain to his senses. Her hair very long, and drenched with wet; her figure drooping with fatigue and cold; her dress, of sheepskin, clinging to her form; the unnatural paleness of her cheeks; and the tears which, after unavailing attempts to restrain them, hung upon those dark eyelashes, were all calculated to excite the sympathy of a spectator. There was too much gallantry in Roallan to permit Idalie to remain long in the situation of a neglected intruder; and it was not long before his gentle voice had induced her to give the history of her recovery by her father, and her having since lost him in crossing the river. Henry had brought a blanket and a robe, and Roallan, taking her horse, picketed him near. He was some time absent; and, on his return, he insisted on Idalie's putting on his shirt, which was but a day old, and a blanket in exchange for her wet garments. This was effected behind the bushes, and she reappeared—the blanket tied round her waist by a handkerchief, and at the neck by a whary,* taken from the fringe of her wet dress. There was no constraint in her manner; and, hanging up her moccasons by the fire, she sat down to warm her feet—those feet, which in all Indians are well formed, were in her beautiful; never having been deformed by shoes, but left to grow as Nature intended. Gathering herself up in the robe, she was soon sound asleep.

The morning broke over the low and dull horizon, which appeared below the trees; and the men of the party had loosed the horses, watered them, and returned to the fire, before Idalie awoke. Her sleep seemed restless; and murmurs disturbed her dreams, in which she called on Auguste and on her father. Roallan gazed upon her, until her eyes opened with an almost supernatural light, and gleamed on him in wild

* Strip of leather cut as narrow as tape, and used in nearly the same way.

excitement. Covering up her head as if to recover some recollection, she laid still a moment, and the two hunters retired to let her fully recover, and rise without restraint. The sound of their retreating steps had no sooner died upon her ear, than she sat up, threw back her hair, and in a minute more, after a steady and yet hurried glance, as if in search of some one, she bounded off to the river side. The first thought of Roallan was that she wished to escape, and it gave him a pain for which he could hardly account. He would have followed but for his companion, who, with a smile, asked him if he wished to aid at a lady's toilet. Her return was not long deferred; and the downcast look with which she picked her way through the broken branches and the prickly pear was, as graceful and engaging as the step of the antelope. "I fear that my father has lost all hope of finding me, and is gone," she said, after they had met together at the fire. It is needless to go through the conversation with Roallan, which was held in French, and in which she was made acquainted with as much of his history as he wished to be known. She was informed that he had left his camp, on its way back to the other side of the mountain, and that he was hunting; but the result was, that, before the sun was three hours high, they were lading a spare horse with the meat of two fat cows. Henry had gone down to the mouth of the Sandy to look for Montalt's trail, and the two were about to return to their last night's camp to await his coming. There was a joyous confidence in the manner of Idalie; and the listless and somewhat proud air of Roallan, was evidently changed.

We must now return to the camp, where we left Altowan and his party. They had moved on to Big Sandy, not far from where it issues from the last barrier of rock, to assume the character from which it derives its name; and Roallan—tempted on the way to leave the trail, in order to take advantage of the plains that extend to the south, to enter his untried horses in the chase—had been carried away by its overwhelming interest, and found himself, at night, where his fire attracted the attention of Idalie. Not wishing to remain in a narrow valley, through which the creek seeks its way among thickets of willow, and where horses might be stolen unperceived, even in the day, his camp moved upward toward the base of the mountain. There, behind the first range, is a plain extending toward the east, into which many small branches descend, meandering from unknown cavities, and whose waters flow to the eastern and the western seas, and where the slightest obstruction could change the source of one into a contribution to the other. In this plain Mr. Stay was recommended to halt until Roallan returned.

It was on the waning of the second day after their arrival, that Altowan and Parfin, who had been out among the crags above after the big-horn,* had descended to the valley, and were seated by the side of a clear pool, shaded by overhanging pines, and confined by a perpendicular rock. Their feet had been torn by briers and cut by stones, and their moccasons worn through; and it appeared as much for the purpose of mending them as to rest from fatigue, that they had lingered in this sequestered spot. "I can not but believê," said Altowan, replying to some previous observation, "that he must have gone to meet the party where they were expected to be on Bear River, as nothing else could have kept him out so long without an accident." The other had heard, and was busy in arranging a piece of his hunting shirt, to form a sole for his moccason, and it was some little time before he answered. "I must bull-hide my feet next time

---

* Argali, resembling the Siberian sheep, so called from the size of the horns of the male.

I follow you on these rocks. As to his having met with an accident, he rides too well to make that probable." "His object must be the same with mine, and he has gained a move; but, Parfin, can not your evidence do without his?" "You know all I can say; you know what I have done; and you know what I will do; it is needless to push the matter beyond its bearing. Montalt alone can do you good; and he is yet to be won; and there lies the difficulty. Should the young ones have met, this will be rendered a harder matter still, and force must be the last resort. In the mean time, I do not know how we are to manage these prisoners. There is bad blood already brewing about them, and it is evident the Elk's-horn would have the Ree."* "Some of the whites are anxious to buy her; she is a fine girl," said the other, musingly. They were now moving out of the embrasure of rock, from which the basin by which they had been sitting, precipitates its waters; and the view of the camp and the plain around, was suddenly opened before them. Some of the horses had wandered out toward the spot where they stood, and a horse-guard was riding toward them. Altowan sat down a moment to enjoy the scene, and to muse on the singular position in which he had placed himself. Parfin sauntered on. He who had appeared driving in the stray horses was now close to Altowan. Parted on the forehead, a profusion of long black hair fell in luxuriance on his shoulders; his countenance was regular, and of an olive rather than the copper color usual in the Indian race. There was a bravery in the whole air, and manner, and attitude in which he presented himself before Altowan; and after a moment's pause, he led his horse to the water which was running near. There was, however, a certain look in the eye and curl in the lip, which counteracted the arched eyebrow and the open front, and threw an expression of sensuality into features of the most beautiful mold. He dropped the trail-rope of his horse, and seated himself at the feet of Altowan; and, without raising his eyes, addressed him: "The eagle who flies near the sun, though he goes long without food, must descend upon the prairie cock and the fawn, and his smallest wants lower him from his pride of place." An inquiring but not unkind look, was thrown on the Broadashe, which was caught in one of those furtive glances which he habitually cast around. "I know you have need of me," he rejoined, "and I have not forgot that you saw the blood of the young Pine, and who struck the blow? I am true to you; and when you speak, I will listen." He sunk his eyes into the stream, in which his feet were kicking about the pebbles, with an air that had lost its animation.

---

* General abbreviation of the Arrickoras.

The thoughts of Altowan wandered far from the remote spot where they sat, and the singular being who was his companion. He had been an unexpected witness to the revenge which Broadashe had wreaked on a young warrior who had slighted and wronged him, and he had concealed his knowledge of it from those whose vengeance would have crushed him. This circumstance had chained the Broadashe to Altowan; and whether from gratitude for the past, or fear for the future, or personal affection, there was no opportunity offered in which he omitted to show his attachment and devotion. "You may as well tell me your news, as I see you have something to tell, Watoe." "The chief knows more than I can tell, but I can say what I have seen. The daughter of the old French chief is with the young white chief; they are in his lodge." The eyes of Altowan had fixed Watoe to the spot, and bore down the scrutiny he would have exercised. He pointed to the horse, which was straying beyond the length of the rope, and moved toward the camp at a quiet pace, in which the beholder would not have perceived the agitation that lurked beneath a composed demeanor.

The scene which presented itself in the camp, was somewhat different from that which he had left, or from that which he expected to find. There was a bustle and life it had not before exhibited. The men were busy in catching the horses, and in measuring the ground for racing, and all wore the appearance of commotion. A group was collected near Roallan's lodge; and toward that, Altowan guided his course, as it seemed the universal goal. Old Montalt had been followed and found by Henry, and was now with his daughter in the camp. The greeting between Altowan and him was not deficient in cordiality. In this way, with apparent unanimity, the camp, composed of these varied elements, moved round the eastern end of the mountain, and was in three days on the junction of the Big Windy and the smaller stream of that name —one rising from the west, and the other from the eastern part of the range we have described. The valley where these waters meet, is one of the largest and best supplied with game of any in these parts; and the river's course is marked by a luxuriant growth of cotton-wood, as it winds its way toward the northern confines of the vale, through which it cuts a passage between perpendicular rocks. Numerous passes, give access to herds of buffalo that the Indian or white hunter has disturbed, and that alternately flock to, or leave its banks; and the elk and the grizzly bear, are found in great numbers in its brakes. The great extent of pasture makes it a chosen range for camps; and it is often the wintering ground for the Crows, in whose lands it lies.

The sun rose bright and clear in the east, and the long shadows and dark defiles were in strong relief; the region of the pine had its gloomy dominion on the mountain side, and the snows of a thousand years shone on the peaks above. It was the morn after their arrival at the Forks, as they are called, and bands of buffalo were scattered round, where they had not been scared by the smell of camp or the route it had come. There had been a plan for a general "surround," as this species of wholesale hunting is denominated, and all was kept quiet in order to effect the object. A great proportion of the horses remained tied to their pickets, after the dawn had given the signal for *turn out;* and the minor preparations, which had been neglected the evening before, were now in active progress. The lodge of Roallan showed an unusual bustle; and the number of impatient steeds that pawed the ground round it, marked it as the abode of those who were rich in the supreme blessing of a numerous stud. When it was ascertained that all were ready, a general move and the saddling of riding horses, took place. Independent of those whose lot it was to butcher and bring in the meat, there might have been, altogether, fifty well-mounted horsemen, besides others whose services might be useful in turning in the herd which it was the object of the hunt to destroy. This species of hunting, which is practiced by the Crow Indians, is a great means of preserving their country rich in every species of animal that these regions afford. There is no tell-tale left; and a neighboring herd is unaware of the destruction in its neighborhood, if not within the orbit of the chase. A small herd had been reported at the distance of about three miles from the camp. They had descended from the heights and the gullies which furrow their sides, and were grazing quietly toward the bottom of the valley. The Elk-head was already on his horse, and harangued his people to check their eagerness and maintain order. Altowan followed, musingly, the gay and animated stranger, behind whom were ranged those who were mounted, so as to be able to partake of the sports of the day, while there remained in the camp a very small proportion of its inmates, to guard against unforeseen attacks.

There was a restrained eagerness in the character of the cavalcade as it proceeded, headed by its chief, and followed by mules to bring in the spoils of the field. Idalie rode with the squaws in the rear, on a horse which her father had given her, which was of extreme beauty of form, and pure white. Mr. Stay was also among the stragglers; and the sly looks of his female companions at his awkward attempts to restrain a fiery horse, were to him a matter of increased embarrassment. Having already more on his hands than he could manage, he made however, in the intervals, the best acknowledgments he could to what he deemed their advances, and would unquestionably have preferred to bestow on them the caresses he lavished on his prancing steed. By the aid of Roallan's camp, all the Indians were mounted; and it might be remarked that they had not chosen the worst horses of the party. Having proceeded against the wind toward the unconscious herd until within a short distance, the entire affair was nearly spoiled. Three bulls, which had been concealed in a small ravine, started out as if from the prairie, and but a small bute separated them from the rest of the band. While some of the whites had dismounted to shoot, three of the Indians were already straining their horses to come up with, or turn them, before they could be perceived by the rest. It was a burst at their utmost speed; and the silent but fatal arrow, had already stopped two, and the third was rushing into the midst of the throng of hunters, where nothing could have saved them from a general uproar of firearms, but that the danger of shooting each other restrained the whites, and the Indians were bent upon baiting him to his last agony. With tongue hanging out and bloody—weakened, enraged, and bewildered—he backed himself against some to confront the rest, seeming to acquire fresh obstinacy of life by multiplied wounds. There was no checking the shout and yell, as his enemies dashed on their prey; and he shook his shaggy mane, leaped upon them with desperate energy, generally to meet a lance wound or an arrow from a more active foe. At this juncture, Parfin, fearing that the noise might mar the more important operations of the day, dashed through the throng, and coming behind the enraged animal, cut his ham strings, and dropped him on his hind quarters. He was now deprived of the use of half his body, and sat waving backward and forward upon his fore legs. With a cruelty natural to savages, if not to the whole human race, he was here tormented until his head sunk in the dust, and still in the attitude of defence, death relieved him from his tormentors.

The general stir subsided; the barbed arrows were cut out, those for hunting extracted, and the huge carcass was left to be despoiled of such parts as the varied wants of the camp might demand. Mr. Stay was busily employed in taking the skin off the rump of the animal, to make cords, with a blunt knife and unskillful hand. This was a laborious operation, and the hot sun did not permit it to be a cool one. "It is strange," he said, "with so many cords wanting, I should alone seize the opportunity of securing a partial supply. Men lose all thought here; and this animal's carcass is left without account, meat and hide, while they scour the plains to run down their horses. Who is to keep reckoning? They won't even keep *dead reckoning!*" And, pleased with the thought, he cut a gash in the skin; but while this soliloquy was going on, his horse, naturally impatient, had disentangled the rope with which he was tied to a sage bush, and was making off over the plain. Mr. Stay looked after him, half pleased at the occurrence, but for which, he thought, he should have been obliged to take a dangerous part in the hunt. But dreading the loss of a valuable steed, with a constitutional perplexity he stood gazing after him. Watoe had already, with instinctive perspicacity, observed the demeanor and proceedings of Mr. Stay, and felt a strong desire to aid in relieving him of a horse he could not ride, and leaving his own work-horse in its place. He in fact, unperceived by the other, had loosed the rope and added another to its length. It was not without some surprise therefore, that Mr. Stay perceived him led back by a squaw, as he thought, after he had seen him disappear over the height. He however, attributed this act of kindness to the character of the females of these regions, as he had heard it described, and in his simplicity conceived that this was an advance which might be turned to good account. On the horse being brought up, which had been easily caught from the additional length of cord dragging behind, he was prepared to express his thanks by the most eloquent signs he could command: which however, the supposed squaw received with an averted and downcast look. Laying his hand on his heart, he sought out the really beautiful eyes of Watoe, waggishly thrown in another direction. The bull-hide was forgotten; and the only anxiety of Mr. Stay, was to have the company and propitiate the good graces of his handsome companion. In the course of these endeavors, he found that the change of steeds would be agreeable to the Indian, and he could not conceal that it would be so to himself. As he put the bridle of his horse into the hand of Watoe, it was the signal for vaulting into the saddle; and with a bow and quiver at his side, he was already urging the eager animal that bore him over the neighboring height, before the surprised Stay comprehended that it appeared no part of his intention to remain as his companion. It was necessary, however, to try and keep him within sight; and he accordingly squeezed himself into the squaw's saddle, with which the Indian horse was furnished—the short stirrups and high peaks of which, were calculated to incommode any but those to whom they belong. The jolting and uneasy pace of the horse, kept him in continual concussion from the front to the back of his saddle; and he felt heartily weary of this pommeling when he arrived at the low summit, which gave a view of the plain beyond.

The scene which here presented itself was one to inspire the most vapid disposition or animate the dullest spirit. In every direction around, were to be seen single riders, following one or more buffalo, as they attempted to escape from the circle that surrounded them; while the others were wheeling round and hemming in the band, apparently stupefied by the general attack —one part charging against another, and counteracting any general rush by which they might have forced a passage. Occasional shouts enraged some, and others were brought down by a more fatal aim. It is not to be supposed that the herd was all this time stationary; but as soon as it moved it was headed and turned, sweeping round a considerable circle. Roallan was conspicuous for his close approach and reckless riding—never shooting until he could almost touch the animal he pursued. A small thong of leather confined his luxuriant hair; and the savage and noble forms every where flitting around him, meteor-like in their errant way, gained but little in comparison with the ardent and joyous stranger. Their dark and vengeful eagerness of expression, contrasted well with his fiery freshness —living, as he did, in the bound of his horse and the twang of his bow; and the practiced Indian could not restrain surprise at the expertness of the youthful white. But there were eyes that followed his course with deeper interest than those of the Blackfoot warriors or the whites, who felt proud of their chief—eyes which strained with an unaccountable interest, and burned with a hitherto unknown fire.

Mr. Stay had already impelled his steed through the conflicting orbits of half the field, when he perceived his horse, guided by a more willing hand, dashing away from a cow, in whose side quivered the arrow of Watoe. The wounded animal plunged toward its enemy, and fell in the effort; but the owner of the horse saw him no more. Clouds of dust rising around, obscured the few buffalo that remained of the original band; and upon these, shots were pouring from every quarter. Those whose business it was to collect the meat, were busy butchering; and though none had busied themselves about the bull but himself, he alone of all, was idle here—fearing the balls aimed at the living while prowling among the carcasses of the slain. The time was come he perceived, to flesh his maiden sword or retire inglorious from the fight; and he braced his nerve to the effort. A bull, with protruded tongue, and showing every symptom of fatigue, came up, pursued by several hunters, whose ambition did not lead them in pursuit of cows, whose greater swiftness, and activity, and superior-flavored flesh, render them the object of choice to the wanderers of these regions, both for the palate and the chase. Goaded almost to death, it wanted but the coup-de-grace to finish him; and Stay thought, while the others were fighting shy of his terrible menaces rather than his power to hurt, he might plant his ball in a vital place. He accordingly raised his gun, and aimed as his object staggered under his wounds; but the shot did not take effect where he intended; and the cry of pain elicited from a half-breed by a wound in the heel, and the exclamations of "You have shot Nagos!" accompanied the dying agonies of the bull. Stay's naturally kind disposition was alarmed by the pain which the wounded youth seemed to endure, and he transferred his thoughts, with perfect simplicity, as if from one page of a ledger to another, to affording him relief. He was, however, not a little shocked to find himself accused of having caused the wound. "How is that possible," he exclaimed, "when I shot at the buffalo?" But the surrounding voices determined the question against him, and he was obliged to submit to the imputation, offering whatever ransom might be required for the damage done, with an air of injured innocence.

While these events were taking place, the greatest part of the herd had been destroyed, and the horses of the hunters were returning jaded, toward the camp; when a war cry suddenly arose among them, and the forms of several blackened Indians appeared as if from the earth, spreading confusion and surprise from the boldness of the attack. With fresh horses they had the advantage over Roallan's camp; and it seemed to be their object to cut off the stragglers, while a desultory fire was kept up on those who huddled together round Stay. Among these were the women, including Idalie; but her father was not there, and her eye ran eagerly over the prairie in search of him. At last some object seemed to attract her, and she shot from the group like an arrow from a bow. "She is on the wrong course for camp," said Stay, as he gazed after her. "Get into this hollow, boys, and they can't touch us." There was a small hollow, which sank down perpendicularly for five or six feet, into which they descended, and the Indians did not venture within shot. Leaving them to the anticipations of a siege, we must pass to the scattered and more distant hunters thus taken by surprise.

The war cry of the Crows sounding among them—their horses fatigued, and their arrows and ammunition almost expended—a retreat upon the camp was likely to be a matter of some danger. But the Crows were determined that this should not be made in a body; and, detaching twos and threes to attack single enemies, they made sure of some trophies. Of those singled out for this species of attack, was Roallan. Among the first, conspicuous from his own appearance, and the noble animal he rode, it was evident he was a principal chief; and two Crows rushed toward him with the rivalry of a race. He was armed but with a bow, and there were but three arrows remaining in the quiver. Those who attacked him had guns; the only chance he had therefore, was in a running fight. His horse was already jaded by a hard day's work; but it was necessary he should now exert his last energies, or leave his rider a victim to superior numbers. As one, or two, or more, had borne down to cut off his retreat, strained to the utmost speed that the uneven nature of the ground would admit, his pursuers still gained upon him. The best course was the river side, though the odds there, were still in favor of numbers; but he dashed on, and had already got within three hundred yards of the wood that fringes its banks, when he perceived that this slight change in his course had given those in pursuit an advantage over him; and for the first time, he struck his horse with the whip. The spirited animal, unused to the lash, sprung to the blow; and the Crows were still a hundred yards behind. But this momentary acceleration gained him but the wood, when he felt his horse flag, with a feeling that he had now but to die as a man, as death seemed inevitable. He had entered a thicket and emerged, and, as he plunged into the next, his horse stumbled and fell, and Roallan was thrown over his head. In a moment he had seized his ears, and kept him down panting under his weight thrown on his neck. The place was a small hollow, worn out by the stream when in flood, and overgrown by some dwarf shrubs. The Crows rushed past; some skirting, some searching the bushes, but none supposing that so low a thicket could conceal a horse and his rider.

There were other fugitives, also, still in advance, who might have been mistaken for their chase, and they kept on down the stream. After remaining in his constrained position for some time, Roallan allowed his horse to rise, and led him among some willows and buffalo bushes, where it was almost impossible to penetrate without forcing a passage. Here he determined to remain while he supposed there was a chance that any of the party might pass or come in sight. Making his horse fast, he kept a look-out with anxiety for some time; but an unbroken stillness prevailed.

Far up the opposite hills, forming the base of the mighty structure above, it was possible to detect the dark form of a buffalo; but smaller objects were not to be discovered. On the other side, the lower line of hills—which bounded the valley on the north, and through which Wind River forces a passage between many miles of perpendicular rock—was too distant to show any living body to the naked eye. All there, wore the air of a vast solitude, but might still be full of unseen danger. Roallan had remained in this situation upward of an hour, when he perceived, by the startled appearance of his horse, that there must be something near calculated to create alarm. Seizing the bridle to prevent his making any noise, he stood ready for the worst that might befall. He could distinguish the breaking of branches, and the tread of feet, and the low voices of conversation in his immediate vicinity; and he had now no doubt, that his trail had been discovered. His thoughts involuntarily fled far away, to dwell, while yet they might, on other scenes and distant climes. The future forever shut out, the past was the more distinct and the more dear. Centuries of thought roll through these condensed moments. The lordly halls of his mysterious father; the Oriental luxury of his early days; the adulation of the world, in the glories of which his young spirit had reveled; and an undefined interest in a being of these wilds, came over him as he awaited the last struggle. But the sound of that voice was not one of harsh and murderous note; the movement of the branches and the rush of Roallan brought him not forth into a space to ply his weapon, but into the arms of Idalie.

It was not to be supposed that Roallan could have had several days' intercourse with a lovely girl, in all the freshness of nature, without some feelings of tender interest; but it was difficult to define what they were. On her part, the personal appearance and the kind treatment of the stranger, had made an impression of which she was not aware, farther than that her first thoughts and her quickest anxieties were for him, after her father. She had seen Montalt, and joined him in time to turn him back from the direction of danger; but her eye was wild and wandering, even after she had seen the Crows driven off, which was accomplished on the death of their partisan, who lost his horse from the fire of Mr. Stay's party, and was killed by Altowan. They were thus proceeding, when they came upon the thicket where Roallan was concealed, and the neighing of his horse betrayed him. The first impetuous movement of both opened the secret of their hearts. Montalt looked indifferent; and they gave way to that sensation which poets have sung and sages have condemned—that mystic influence destined by nature to be felt by all, but whose hidden sympathies are oft so strangely awakened. In the brightest passages of Roallan's gayest days, that chord had been but lightly touched which now vibrated in unison with the first impulse in the heart of Idalie.

Montalt busied himself in extricating Roallan's horse, and taking him with the others, to water; and he found that it would be necessary for him to remind the lovers of the fact that they were still at some distance from camp, in a wild and dangerous country. "They will return, though we shall not be troubled for some time. It is their way after the loss of a leader; and he must have been one of some note among them," said Montalt, as he mounted. "They had met some of Roallan's people, who had seen the body of the fallen chief, and described him as a large man with a gash across his cheek; and by the marks they give," continued Montalt, "he is as great a rogue as there is in the Long Hair's* band." The thoughts of those he addressed were, however, otherwise occupied; and they proceeded silently, except when met by people in search of the fruits of the day's hunt. On the heights along their left, were every where stationed videttes, to give warning of any return of danger; and they arrived in camp with the calmness of a return from an ordinary excursion.

Idalie had constructed a hut of boughs, resembling in shape the covering of a wagon, called a shanty. It was near Roallan's lodge, on a green spot overhanging the river—the Indians and whites forming a semicircle, of which the river was the chord. The camp fires threw up their smoke in columns; at every mess there was a foaming kettle, and numerous roasts and marrow bones, garnished the blazing piles. Masses of meat lay in confused heaps in every direction, which some were cutting into thin slices to dry, while others tended the culinary operations. All the meat gatherers had by this time returned with their loads, and the Indians were dropping in one by one. The sun was sinking over the head of the valley, the horses were driven up and kept near the camp, the air was still, and the murmur of voices sounded through the grove like the hum of bees. The river alone, fled swiftly through the scene, to pour its tribute into the Father of Waters.

---

* A celebrated Crow chief, who has allowed his hair to grow to the length of eleven feet five inches.

The disappearance of the sun below the horizon was the signal for "*catching up;*" and at the word being given, which sounds like the Oriental call to prayer, every one went forth to secure those animals allotted to his charge, and bring them to their nightly stand. This evening there was no careering, no curveting or bragging, as is wont—each riding his best horse and vaunting his speed. Enough had been gone through to fatigue the stoutest during the day. Not so with the men. Like all other hunting fields, it had its boasters; and, after some skirmishing among those who had been out, they, as if by mutual consent, agreed to inflict the whole burden of their exploits upon those who had remained at home. This accumulation of recitative, prostrated in time those who listened; and those who told, were scarcely interrupted by the *all's well* of the guard. The blazing fires began to burn dim, and all wore the air of security and peace. The Indians who were with the camp, had congregated round their fire, and the pipe went its rounds. The not unmusical language of the Blackfeet, sounded earnest in this council. The Elkshead seemed to have a purpose in putting forth his eloquence; and there were some who seconded him with an ardor that would have made his cause their own; but there was nothing beyond the dignity of Indian self-possession, and there were spies on the only men who knew their tongue. One of these spies was Watoe, who, with the winning playfulness which characterized him, was offering to mend or make moccasins, and giving loose to that flow of spirits which shows itself so rarely in the Indian character, and is so buoyant and free when it comes, was a source of gayety even to those who did not understand any thing more than its infectious feeling.

A blaze of resinous pine cheered and warmed the lodge, of which Roallan occupied one side, a not unpleased spectator of the frolic going on between Altowan, Pinatsi, and the Broadashe on the other. During this, Watoe contrived to say something to Altowan, who shortly left the lodge. Roallan, who had appeared amused at the scene, asked Stay what he thought of the hermaphrodite. "She can pick up wood, and, I believe, is as good a hunter as I am," said he, "and I don't think will give much trouble; though it won't do to allow her to ride whatever horse she pleases, either." They were interrupted by the entrance of Elkhead, who appeared at the door of the tent—his tall form and sullen features being lightened by the glaring fire which burned at his feet. Perceiving that he awaited an invitation, Roallan made a sign that he should be seated; and, after a pause, requested to know, through Pinatsi, what were his wishes. "We have got the scalp of the bull, and the Crows are gone back; we bring but mischief to you if we go along with you nearer their village, so we shall return to our country. We do not let the white man trap there, who does not live with us; and our young warriors are fond of the horses of the whites. The English protect and furnish our enemies with arms; so does the Long Knife. They keep us at war, that we may be forced to buy their guns. We can not love the whites; but those that know you, will smoke with you; and your horses are safe. You are the brother of the Elkhead." Roallan answered, that the reasons of the partisan were good, but that it grieved him to part with him, and that he wished to know why there should not be peace between the Blackfeet and the whites; and why they would not keep their treaties when they were made; and why they continued to kill the whites? The brow of the Indian changed during the discourse of Roallan. "The young chief comes from beyond the great waters," he said, "and the deeds of the whites here, are not known to him. When did a Blackfoot break his word, or offer the hand of peace with a heart of evil, until taught to do so by them? Who fired at my brother, while giving the hand of friendship? But the very earth was ashamed, and received the ball, and hid it forever! Who but a half-breed, taught by the whites, gave his hand to a Blackfoot chief, while he told his companion to shoot him? His blood was spilled by a dog, in the sight of the Great Spirit. But the young chief is not of this kind. He will be welcome in our country. I will look for him when the grass begins to wither." He ceased to speak, and his countenance had resumed its calm, though stern repose; but it was evident, from his whole demeanor, that he liked Roallan. After a moment's pause, he added, "I am now ready to go; has my brother any thing to say?" Roallan desired Pinatsi to ask if he had remarked a sorrel horse of his, considered the swiftest in the camp, and to tell the partisan to take him, and remember his white brother. Roallan then rose, and led the way to where he was tied, and delivered the cord into the hand of the Indian, who well knew the value of the gift. He studied for a moment the countenance of the youth, perhaps to try and find out the motive of this present, or from a momentary doubt of his understanding aright; but the expression of that proud lip and eagle eye, as his bust shone like white marble in the pale moonlight, showed that it was a free gift; and the look of the savage rested in unconcealed delight upon his generous host. He then embraced him, and they parted, each equally pleased with the other.

The doubtful indications of the break of day, saw the Blackfeet partly preparing for their departure. Those on foot had already set out, and those on horseback were about to follow. The horse guard were getting afoot, and the reveille cry of "*turn out!*" roused strange forms from beneath scattered heaps of blankets or buffalo robes. The neighing of horses, and still more noisy impatience of the mules to be loosed from the picket, was over, and a calm succeeded, almost as profound as the previous period of sleep. Mr. Stay, who had a profound dread of starving, was already urging on the cutting up of the meat of the yesterday's hunt, for the purpose of drying; and the routine of a mountain camp, was taking its usual course. It was in the waning of this morn that Idalie strolled down the side of the stream in search of the red willow for smoking. Some trivial want or desire, induced Roallan to go to the hut where she and her father lived; but he there found only the old man, who was busy making arrows, and answered the inquiry for his daughter by saying he expected her back directly. The sunset came, and the "*catch up*" sounded on the camp, as a relief from labor and a call to revelry. But, amid the din and search, where was Idalie? Her father, whose horses she tied up, together with her own, was now looking out for her, and feeling more anxiety than he cared to show, at finding her absent in a manner so unaccountable. It was well on in the night when the certainty of some disaster having befallen Idalie, forced itself on all; but there were different feelings regarding it, though all were interested in the beautiful daughter of the wilds. Old Montalt tied up his horses, and put fuel on the fire, and spread his bed; but this did not show, as he intended it should, that he missed her not, and could do without her. At last he came to Roallan's lodge, as he said he felt lonely, and anxious about his daughter. Roallan proposed to send out, in case she might have lost her way, more to moot the question of possibility of help than to propose it in any specific shape; but the father shook his head. "There are but two ways she could be taken: the one by Indians, and the other by a bear; in both cases a night is too long a start." The thoughts of the bereaved parent, could not but recur to the death of Auguste, and how willingly he would now give her to such a one, if it were only within his power; and his head sunk on his knees in unutterable anguish. Every noise in camp and every move of the horses, was at first hailed as betokening her approach; but the midnight watch brought no relief to their fears. The other inmates of the lodge composed themselves to sleep, and Montalt sat by the fire.

It is not to be supposed that this composure on the part of Altowan and Roallan proceeded from indifference. They had instinctively found themselves out to be rivals, and each wished to conceal from the other, emotions but too deeply felt; besides, they had each formed the project of following in search; and knew that the repose they might enjoy, was a necessary preparation for the fatigues they might have to encounter.

CHAPTER IV.

The morning of the departure of Altowan and Pinatsi from the camp, had passed from dawn to sunrise; and Roallan, uncertain what course to take, though eager to follow in pursuit, yet debated, after hearing all the advice and information he could collect, as to that which offered the fairest chance of overtaking the captors of Idalie; nor was there any one on whom he could rely to aid him, unless it were her father. Notwithstanding the apparent calmness of the old man, he was inwardly a prey to deep regret at the loss he had sustained; and though not without parental affection, he felt also the loss of a companion of the sweetest temper and the most ready cheerfulness, whose willing hand saved him all exertion, and left him to dream in indolence of prolonged ease, and of the riches still to be acquired by means of her charms. The object of the expedition would be attained by the profits of anticipated purchases and sales by Mr. Stay, and a general desire to meet at the great rendezvous, prevailed among the hired hands of his camp; so that these individual feelings could have little sway. The power of Roallan was of course considerable, although it is not to be supposed that he could force any of his people to join him against their will, in an expedition without a guide, and without a prospect of success, to compensate for the certain danger it must incur. Besides, from all that had been told the "greenhorns" by the older travelers, and by the evidence they had of the slight estimation of females among the Indians, they were not easily to be moved to deeds of enthusiastic chivalry. Balancing, therefore, all the remote chances of success with the account the old hands gave of the country and its dangers, the discussions at the different fires, left the whole camp impressed with a sense of the folly of an attempt which they were aware might be proposed, of recovering, for their young chief, the now avowed object of his anxiety and affection; so that when Henry, at the desire of Roallan, sounded some of the experienced trappers, [illegible] was found that not only would they refuse to start on an expedition, which, though attended by no other risk, might deprive them of the anticipated pleasures and festivities of the meeting of the traders on the Susquadee, but that it would be considered highly wrong to attempt to persuade any of the inexperienced into a measure which could only be productive of personal gratification to a thoughtless young man. It is necessary to understand, also, that there are situations in these wilds in which a small party, ignorant of their route, would be in peril almost as great as a boat at sea without a compass—surrounded by dangers from any Indians they might meet, and killing game for their subsistence, at the risk of bringing on their unwary heads observation and consequent attack.

The camp of Roallan was on the left fork of Wind River, which rises at the northwestern extremity of the range that we have already called the Mountains of the Winds, and runs along their northern base in a southeastern direction, until met by a range of heights and another stream, which turns its course to the left and increases its volume. Not far above this junction, the eastern fork of the river meanders through a grove of cotton wood; and on its right bank runs a low range of sandstone bluffs cut down perpendicularly to the green sward, with thickets of buffalo berry and currant bushes, and dwarf pear, and gooseberry, and bubbling wells, which refresh alike the eye and the palate. The camp had passed this spot, and forded the river a little lower down; but Stay had remarked its beauty, and having a taste for poplar groves, and a horror of the inconveniences of narrow limits, proposed moving there as a diversion from the theme of Idalie's loss; and Roallan acquiesced in the arrangement, as it afforded him time and opportunity to carry into effect the plan he had formed of attempting the rescue. The point between the forks, is but a narrow plain near their junction, though widening above—the streams which form it, coming from opposite points of the compass; but from where the camp was situated on the one, to where it was about to be removed on the other branch, was but a short distance. The hunters however, were to take the opportunity of the general catching up, to sally forth on an extended hunt—there being, from the late disturbance of the valley, little chance of finding meat near at hand. Roallan and Stay rode together as they crossed the plain on which their races had been run; and the parade of Indians on their war horses, careering up and down at, even, had been emulated by whites, when the whole space wore the air of a tournament. They had lost the Indian part of the scene; but while the long line of loaded mules were sedately following their leaders, there was still a noble band of horses, urged on by their drivers with the lasso and yells re-echoed by the groves from either side. A cloud of dust scarce marked their way, as, after dashing through the river, they were lost in the shades beyond; it was but a step across the arid plain to this fresh and flowering herbage.

One party of hunters had already set out to the westward; and another, headed by Henry, was to proceed in an easterly direction. It was often the habit of Roallan, to go out with these parties when he did not prefer being accompanied by Henry alone. He had dashed on in front, while Stay was watching the progress of the mules through the foaming torrent; and the wood concealed his course. Pointing out a spot for a horse-pen, and a turfy carpet under a shade for the site of his own tent, he was not long in disappearing from the eye, as he followed the course which Henry's party had pursued. Mean while the camp was forming in a circle as it came up, the different messes collecting fuel and the willow boughs for constructing their temporary abodes. While this was the employment of some, others were exploring the smooth surface of the rocky wall which bounded the eastern side of their camp, in expectation of finding, in some recent hieroglyphic, the record of the last Indian war party which had passed from the country of the Snakes. But the heat of the day, induced most to abandon all more active exertion, and fan themselves to sleep under the fresh and grateful shade. It was a lovely scene, to look from under that tall grove on the snowy peaks of the mountains and the dark valleys that covered their sides, inhabited by Indians unknown in their habits and language—never quitting their secluded range but to send the few peltries they obtain to their richer neighbors for some article necessary to their rude and simple lives. Hunters have traversed the valleys of these mountains often; but never, save once, have they come upon the dark abode of the Chochoco.

The lodge of Roallan had been pitched; its carpets and its buffalo robes, its tiger skins and its robes of sable; choice arms of every sort hung around, and in the center stood the censer, from which was to be lit the sacred pipe. The couches, which extended round the lodge, scarcely differed in appearance; but that one on the right hand, at the entrance, was heaped with richer furs, and spread with more scrupulous care than the others. A part of the back was raised, so that a slight breeze might be admitted, and a view obtained of the mountains and the rapid river that flowed from their melting glaciers. On the left of the door, lay the youth who had followed Roallan from the ship, in a dress which he had procured from the party of Indians who had just left the camp. He seemed to enjoy the change from the sailor's jacket and trowsers to the shirt and leggins of the Blackfeet. He had been busying himself with various matters appertaining to his charge; and perceived that the store of powder and balls, which it was part of his duty to keep always ready for Roallan, had been unaccountably diminished and almost wasted. This discovery seemed to throw a shade over his usually sunny smile. Some other things, trivial in themselves, now came to add force to a growing impression that there was—to use the language of his own thoughts—"something in the wind;" and there is no one so jealous of a want of confidence as a valet who thinks he has, or merits, that of his master. He changed his position to the back part of the lodge, where he could see out both in that direction and at the door thrown open in front, so that any arrival or movement in the camp, could not fail to be perceived. But the watch and the cares of youth, are neither long nor deep; and the nodding head and drooping eyelids, soon settled into repose.

There was, however, one near who but seldom slept, and whose slumber was said to be but a thin veil over an open eye and ear. He had been making a circuit round the camp in search of something he did not need, gathering information, and making small purchases of popularity, which could not excite attention, though by continual increase they formed an important stock. His air, as he came toward the lodge of Roallan, underwent a total change; a marked earnestness took the place of the unmeaning smile it had before worn; he entered with an air almost of command; and seating himself within reach, did not hesitate to wake the slumbering occupant, who started up as if surprised in some act of crime. "Have you nothing to tell me?" inquired Parfin in good English, with a slight foreign accent. "I do not know that I have," was the reply, "unless that I believe he has gone after that girl." "What makes you think so?" rejoined Parfin, his eyes still firmly fixed upon his companion. "Know you not that if he is gone, he may most likely never be seen again?" A shade of concern came over the brow of the youth, and he raised his eyes to his interrogator with a look of greater interest, stating at once the little things, which, put together, made up the reason of his belief in Roallan's departure. Parfin heard him with unmoved calmness, and left the lodge without remark. The other looked after him, and muttered to himself, "I scarcely know whether he means him good or harm."

About evening, Stay began to inquire for Roallan; and the answers he received, were such as to raise a suspicion that he had left the camp on that wild search, the folly and danger of which he thought had been fully demonstrated in the ample discussion of the night before. However this gentleman might be disposed to view the matter, taking it as a parallel case to the departure of Watoe—regarding whose sex he had never been undeceived—there was a deep feeling of interest among the hired men; and many groups were formed round the fires that night, to discuss the propriety of following in a body the way he might have taken. But a difficulty arose as to the route; and the resolutions of fresh hands are easily damped by a few words of doubt from reluctant experience. In this state of doubt the dawn found the camp of Roallan. But there were two who had made up their minds as to the course to be pursued; and two stout mules stood saddled under the rock, where, from different directions, appeared Parfin and Jasper, the sailor boy we have already mentioned. Both were in Indian costume. They mounted, and hurried over the rolling heights with considerable rapidity, to cut off the bend of the eastern fork of Wind River, and strike it at the grave of Brais, who was killed in a scuffle with one of his comrades many years before, and had been buried on its banks.

There are few more dreary tracts than that broken ground, torn up by torrents, which lies on either side the way to the pass which leads on to Sweet Water; and as there are seldom any buffalo on the end of the mountain range, there was little doubt that the hunters had taken the left-hand road toward Sweet Water, instead of that which leads by the Coal Tar Spring. Upon gaining the height, however, on the end of the mountains, the tracks of buffalo appeared, leading to the right, in great numbers; and appearances of bands having crowded over precipices in some places, showed that they had been pursued. The track also, of a mule, in one of the paths along the precipice, clearly pointed out that they had been followed by whites, as well as by a herd of wolves, whose foot-prints had almost obliterated the traces of every thing else. They thought they saw something move on a distant height, though it was quickly lost again; but the hope which thus sprung up, of so soon overtaking their search, or getting so surely on their track as to be certain of their course, induced additional application of the whip and the heel. They had rounded several green heights scattered with pines, and looked down on the deep, red jaws of the gorges beneath. Occasional groves of birch and aspen, contrast their tender green with the deeper shades of the cedar and the pine; and the startled antelope bounds from your path, where no eye can follow his rapid course, plunging into the bottom of a deep glen, where the mosaic bed of a torrent is scarcely covered with the water of the placid spring; a safe and beautiful road leads upward to the source, shut out from the sun by the meeting boughs of the wild cherry and the birch—still, and cool, and traceless as if it had never been trod. They proceeded warily along; and the keen caution of Parfin showed that to him the beauty of the route was but a secondary consideration, while the absent, meditative air of his companion, evinced a complete abandonment to the pleasures of a scene into which they had been transported as if by enchantment. Some scruples which his mule evinced, induced Jasper to suspect that they were near something, which he thought might be a grizzly bear; and he pushed up to his companion to impart his hopes. Parfin had been busy with his ears and eyes, but had not remarked those of the animal he rode, which he now perceived were excited by some attraction, and he pulled up to the spot. Cautioning the other, by a gesture, to remain still, he quietly dropped from his mule, and throwing the riding cord to him, stepped noiselessly into the thicket that lined the banks.

Nothing but an habitual respect to orders, and a general sense of danger in this wild country, would have induced Jasper to remain quiet under the exciting expectation of a bear hunt. A few minutes, however, set the question at rest. Parfin reappeared down the stream, and beckoned his companion to proceed. There were but a hundred yards to a barrier of rocks which crossed the valley in large detached blocks, from below which, bubbled the stream over its bed of feldspar and mica, into a small basin. A margin of turf spreads itself on one side, and a perpendicular cliff rises on the other. The place was beautiful, but not such as those experienced in such matters would choose for safety. "They have left here this morning," said Parfin, as he pointed out the still warm ashes of the fire, with the roasting-sticks and the bones, the remains of a plentiful feast that were scattered around. "But let us be off; we shall find them by the moving of the buffalo." The disappointed youth, and no less disappointed mules, were constrained to pick along one of the paths they found slanting the steep acclivity they had to surmount, from whose bald head they could view the courses of the waters of the Platte and Yellow Stone.

Parfin left the mules in a small hollow near the top, and crawled carefully up to the bare height; but he had scarcely adjusted himself for a survey of the valleys of the Sweet Water, that head in the forests above, when he was startled by a yell from behind a screen of pines, and a gigantic bear appeared at the same moment crashing through their branches, the hair raised on his back, and his head turned for a moment toward the new enemy as he plunged down the opposite side of the height. It was scarcely the work of a moment in Parfin, to remount; and as he and Jasper, urged their startled mules down the slope, they were passed, as if they had been standing still, by Henry, cheering them on as he shot ahead. The mules, encouraged by the example of the horse, mended their pace; but the horseman had already so far gained upon his shaggy chase as to turn him toward the plain.

It was now that the play was to be made; but the roughness of the ground did not allow it to become a trial of speed. Some places, it is true, were open, where the horse almost overtook the less fleet monster; but a thicket or ravine again interposed its protection, and the horse was again thrown out. These thickets were either too small, or the animal, who was gaunt and long of leg, in the racing trim of one not long emerged from his winter seclusion (when they are known to be most swift and dangerous), trusted still to his speed—still disdaining the covert, even as a momentary rest; but the plain that now succeeded, was of longer extent, and the crossing-place easier, and they were nearly abreast—the distance of a hundred yards being all that divided them. It was now that the hunter had to urge his horse to run into, that he might powder-burn the bear by the nearness of the shot. His gallant Roan was strained to his speed; but he neared his foe with a careful eye and an uncertain vibration of the ears; only a few strides divided them, and the head of the bear was turned in the attitude of menace. One stroke of the whip, and the bound of the fleet courser, urged beyond his fears, was within a spring of his foe. Both the hunter and his quarry were preparing for closer quarters; the one already standing in his short stirrups, to steady him for an aim, which it would be, at least, dangerous to miss, and the other watching his enemy with an eye that measured for the bound. The horse, however, though urged closer by the reckless daring of his rider, shrunk from the terrible menace; and it was well for him he did, for the rifle of his master missed fire as the horse diverged, and the spring of the enraged animal fell short. The hunter was now converted, for a time, from a pursuer to one pursued, while he adjusted a fresh cap on his rifle. The horse, finding himself for a moment uncontrolled, darted off to the left; the bear taking a course to the right, toward the wooded and impracticable heights.

Thus thrown out, Henry had to make up his distance up hill and over difficult ground—the instinct of the bear showing him the advantage of the precipitous chasms into which he plunged in retarding his pursuer, who could only skirt the ravine, which now became more rugged, and up which the monster threaded what appeared to be an accustomed path. This burst, as it may be termed, was run in a semicircle, the mules behind keeping the inside, urged on by their riders with the eagerness which inspires every one who engages in this singular and dangerous chase. The death of a shark at sea, is attended with what alone approaches the savage delight with which this animal—the dread and scourge of these regions—is destroyed. The great danger which always attends the pursuit of the grizzly bear, his ferocious character, and the dread which his presence always inspires, make this the most exciting chase upon the American Continent.

The mules, pretty evenly matched, had kept within reasonable distance, taking the string of the bow, so that they could command a full view of the hunt, at which it seemed, at one period, their assistance might be required to extricate the hardy horseman, who appeared now redoubling his efforts again to come up and force a combat. The frequent fissures in the earth, caused by the fall of heavy rains, as well as the rocky ravines—the regular channels of the waters—presented dangerous leaps to the horse, now white with foam; scattered bulls fled from the green retreats that shelter and fatten them; the Wapati stag, still careful of his growing horns, was seen bounding from his covert; and the herds of buffalo, far in the plain below, were roused by those from above, and fled. All this came into view at once to the followers of the chase; and Jasper would have staked the remainder of his existence for half an hour sure of a fleet steed. With straining eyes they followed on; and as they saw the gallant hunter gain in the pursuit, the rocks they neared gave back the long yell—the hail of success. It had become necessary for Henry to bring this race to a contest or a close, as the rugged heights above would afford an easy refuge for the now evidently distressed bear, who, with mouth open and tongue hanging out, began to weave in his lope, while almost within a spring of safety. But the bullet was not to be again diverted from its destined course; and at the last moment, as he turned for an attack to secure his retreat, the ball entered his side, and he fell, roaring with pain and biting the wound with rage. The wound, though large, and planted where it would ultimately prove mortal, did not hinder him from rushing into the thicket. While Henry was pulling up his horse, and reloading, he could hear the breaking of dead branches, as he rolled and moaned with pain; and he was on the point of entering the covert, when the shouts of Parfin and Jasper announced their approach, and excited him to complete his work before they should come up to share the triumph. The red track of blood on the rocks and leaves, and the now more distant growl of the wounded animal, enabled him to proceed about fifty yards, when he found the branches broken and the ground stained with blood, where he had stopped and rolled on the earth, and where a pool of black mud and water had invited him to bathe. Necessary caution had prevented Henry's advancing into a tangled mass of bushes and rocks, so well adapted to ambush; and he paused to look round, certain that the object of his search lurked near. While endeavoring to obtain a view beneath the dark shade, a noise, as if of some animal moving, made him start to his right, when the branches gave way, and he fell suddenly over an old stump, on which still stood some peeled and blighted stems, and from which grew some fresh and lofty boughs. The same sign that led him conducted those who sought him. They rushed at a crash and a shot, and found the bear reeking in black slime and blood, half couched between two stems—where he had sunk from an arrested spring—and Henry creeping off below the adjoining thorns, apparently unhurt, though scarcely out of reach. The heart beat loud at a moment of such critical danger. As Parfin brought up his rifle, he felt his aim less steady; and he thought of the means of escape as he pulled the trigger; but this shot, which took effect behind the ear, at once prostrated the vital powers of the monster; the claws were stretched out, the limbs extended, and the head drooped. The excitement however, of Jasper, was so great, that his shot came unneeded to finish the work.

A few moments sufficed to reload the arms, as they each silently gazed on their victim, who seemed terrible even in death. The immense head drooped, and showed that he had been shot as he sprung; and nothing but that shot at the critical moment, could have saved Henry, already prostrate under the root on which he fell. "We may as well see what is doing as be choked in this blind place," said Parfin, as he retraced his steps to the open, while Jasper eagerly questioned Henry about Roallan—his interest in him exceeding even that he felt in the very exciting scene he had just witnessed. Henry answered him, while cutting off as a trophy, the fore feet of the bear, armed with their enormous claws, that he knew nothing of him. It was with a countenance of regret and concern, as he parted his long hair on his white forehead with his bloody hand, that he gazed upon his companion, and asked if he was serious, and why Parfin, who ought to have known better, thought that he had come with him in the direction contrary to their natural course. "Have you kept a good look-out? can so small a party have passed above you, round the mountain?" asked Jasper. "It is out of any man's power to say that there is no passage above; indeed, it is more probable that there is," answered Parfin.

It would have required more time than this party had to spare, to take the skin of their prize, the vast weight of which alone would have been an impediment; and they all gathered on the outside to smoke and look out, from so conspicuous a spot, for any objects that might be approaching from the plain. They were preparing to mount, there being nothing in view, when, by a buffalo path, there emerged from the adjoining grove, the two men who accompanied Henry, with their two loads of meat. Waiting a moment for them, there was evidently a dilemma as to their farther route. The meat they had to send back to camp; and Parfin still believed that Roallan, with the other party, had gone round the mountain above, and that—as in that direction lay the rendezvous—they might as well keep on that course, and wait there on some of the lakes and sources of the Colorado of the West, which rises on the southwestern side of the chain.

The movements and decisions of men whose lives are hunted, and who feel themselves objects of chase under an unseen eye, must always be rapid and decisive. The muleteers turned back on their tracks; and Henry and his followers in the bear hunt, proceeded alone toward the afternoon sun. It was necessary to get quickly from a spot where they had already been too conspicuous for safety; and they cantered briskly along various worn buffalo paths, changing from one to another, and occasionally taking advantage of a water-course to lose the trail. The sun had sunk so low as to throw the greatest part of their way into shade, which warned Parfin of the time he had been out. They therefore, broke off to the right, up a small creek, where, at the top of a rapid, there appeared to be a small plain; it had probably been a lake, but was now filled up by the wrecks of timber and the deposits of the torrents of spring; it had been formed into a little open space, occasionally interspersed with willow of dwarfish growth, which marked the course of the stream that meandered through its bosom, in search of that momentary repose which it formerly had found. On the margin of this, beneath the premature gloom of the towering pines, they deposited their saddles and lit their solitary fire, the animals greedily browsing the short grass of the adjoining mead. The cooking from their scanty store of meat, was simple and quick; and the eating and the appetite kept pace. There was neither song nor story—the two elder buried in their own thoughts, and the younger already in the arms of sleep. There appeared to be no great cordiality between the first two. The superior knowledge of Parfin in his own country—in its dangers and its chase—added a slight feeling of envy to a general distaste and distrust in the mysterious quiet of his ways; so that the little intercourse that passed between them, was as cold and constrained as the circumstances under which they were mutually bound to each other, would permit. Each wrapped in his blanket, they laid with their feet to the dimming fire; but, before going to rest, Parfin got up, and cutting some pickets, secured the horses to them.

No sounds occurred sufficient to disturb their deep and well-earned repose; and the cold gray dawn found them still at rest. By mid-day they had entered an open and more elevated valley, behind the rugged and woody range which forms the base of the pile above. This valley runs a considerable way along the base of the snowy peaks on the right, and the back of the broken basement on the left. It was late on the second night of their absence from camp, that they halted at the head of a deep ravine that leads downward to one of the small lakes which every where mirror their parent mountains from their bosom. It was time to halt for the night; and they were far above the trails even of those Indians who hover on the mountain side, to stoop like the falcon on the prey they may discover traversing the plain below, which is alike the way to the great rendezvous and the general pass to the regions of the West. Having come thus far to be out of the reach of danger, and enjoy leisure to search for a retreat where they might wait the appearance of some of those camps whose dust might be looked for in every wind, they were fortunate in finding a grassy glade for the horses; and in the conference of the two elder there was exhibited much more frankness than characterized it the evening before. It was arranged that Jasper should remain in charge of the horses, while the others explored the recesses of the adjoining solitude; and we leave him picking off the small portions of meat that adhered to the skin of the bears' feet, preparatory to drying them, and occasionally turning any of the three animals who might show a disposition to wander.

Parfin and Henry descended the banks of a torrent, which disappeared from the plain among fragments of rocks and trees torn from their roots. Down this precipitous descent there was no trace of a path; though here and there, on a broad table-rock, they found traces of the buffalo, though none of the present year. They were both armed with rifles and tomahawk; and Parfin had in addition, a bow and arrows. They had not proceeded far, when Henry, missing his companion, looked round, and found that he had killed a porcupine with his silent weapons. He went back, and not without a feeling of respect for his style of woodcraft, remarked the celerity with which he cleaned the animal and hung it up on the slender point of a bough, giving a momentary glance around as if to mark the place. They then resumed their course, once or twice thinking they caught a glimpse of a deer, and again the crashing of some branches caused them to prepare their arms; but there was nothing to be seen. There were several branches to be crossed that joined and augmented the original stream; which, now much increased, bounded from rock to rock, or tore its foaming way over or around the vast bowlders that were piled in its course. Now letting themselves down ledges of rock, now almost sliding down steep slopes, occasionally catching by a pine branch to stop their way, they at last found themselves at the foot of the descent; where the torrent, now swollen to a considerable size, takes its way across a small flat, running between two lakes, and rushes foaming into the largest, which here, to meet its chafing tributary, buries its head in the foundations of the mountain; while the lower end, winding between bare heights covered with blocks of granite, and sweet, though scanty herbage, is lost in its distant bend. They had descended the right bank of the torrent, but the appearance of the opposite side presented that mixture of indenture and open that promised a more safe and roomy abode than the steep precipice behind them. It only remained to cross the stream, which, in consequence of its breadth and depth, could only be accomplished upon a raft; —two dry logs, tied together with bark, served to support them and their arms as they swung across the deep and eddying pool. Safely on the other bank, they were about to proceed eastward along the base of the mountain they had just descended. A huge perpendicular mass stood on the right, and shaded the small valley from the south, dividing the two lakes, between the upper ends of which it lay, and shadowing the narrow pass. It is only on occasions of flood that any stream issues from the eastward lake into the other; and the space between is of the most romantic wildness and seclusion, yet within a short dash of the plain below. To an Indian horse, accustomed to his own Petrea, where the buffalo, the antelope, and the elk abound, such a spot could not fail to afford some safe hiding-place.

They were seated on a fallen tree that had been hurled from the cliffs above, surveying, as far as they could see through occasional opens, the scene around. "Here, at least, we shall be—" The sentence was interrupted by a merry laugh close by. The blood ran back to both their hearts as they sprung to their feet, and uncertain, cocked their rifles. There was something so unlooked-for in the sound, in a place where solitude appeared to have taken up its abode, that the wildest shout of defiance, and the rush of an ambush, would not have caused the strange and doubtful dread which was produced by that lone mirth close by, and no mortal visible. The suspense was but momentary; rising before them, from some low bushes that seemed scarcely of size to have covered him, appeared a form strange and doubtful even to the practiced eye of Parfin; naked, but for a girdle and moccasins, and a piece of old blanket thrown over the shoulders; a youth whose browned skin would have rendered it difficult to determine his race, were it not for the long and curling brown hair, and laughing blue eyes, in which there lurked a strange wildness. He had a bow in his hand, and at his back hung a quiver of arrows; he continued a sort of inward laugh during the survey he was undergoing; which, however, appeared to agitate Parfin with some emotion deeper than curiosity or surprise. "Auguste!" he said, after considerable hesitation. "Oui, c'est moi," answered the apparition—for so it seemed to those who thought him dead—and he ran off a little distance, and returned with a saddle of venison. "I don't hunt near my own lair," he said, with a look of self-satisfaction. "What are you about here? we heard you were killed." "So I was," answered Auguste; and again he laughed, and flung the meat in the air, and catching it as it descended, "I am not Auguste—I am the Cacajou.*

---

* The name the Canadian hunters give the wolverine.

Where is Altowan? I thought you belonged to him? I am a horse thief, and have two wives; you shall each have one while you stay."

In a manner always reckless and gay, there appeared mingled now in poor Auguste something unsettled, which it was sad to witness in one so universally beloved in the camps. Henry gazed doubtfully on, while Parfin learned by various interrogatories, that some Snakes, to whom he was known, having lost their horses, were on their way to the mountains to lie in wait for an opportunity of obtaining more; and had been witness to the scene on Han's Fork from an adjoining bush. Recovering the body, and proceeding to wring and dry the robe in which he had been wrapped, they found that the water had not penetrated, and that life was not extinct —he having only fainted from pain and loss of blood. They had tended and cured his wound, and carried him with them to their present abode. "But you come and see," he added, "how we live; we keep no guard. I am just come from the Chochocoes, where I have lost all my elk teeth and beads; but, if you give me some powder and ball, I can get them back. Come," he said, and shouldering his meat, to show they should not starve, he moved onward toward the head of the smaller lake, overhung by towering cliffs on either side—the end washing a circular shore of decomposed particles of granite under a fringe of quaking ash and green turf, where bleached bones and drift-wood have been thrown up to mark the height of the floods at the melting of the lower snows, when the waters find an outlet through the plain to the larger expanse below.

They followed their light-hearted guide toward this shore, where the early sun of the morning had almost passed behind its mid-day, to reappear again from the ruddy west, noting the lapse of time by a regular division of the day. They wheeled suddenly to the right, passed over heaps of dead wood and under living branches, and found themselves suddenly in a sort of bower, so constructed as to elude all observation. There was a clear, cold spring at the door, and a small pile of charred wood, to burn, if necessary, during daylight, without smoke; the floor was swept clean, and two beds, placed at angles to each other, formed the back of this singular abode. At a little distance under the rock, two or three dry trees, laid in the forks of others, formed a horse-pen. All the system of their simple menage was easily explained. One squaw sat mending a moccasin and humming a low air. Auguste, as he threw down the meat, gave her some directions, which she appeared not to understand, looking up and uttering the Snake *Hacané!* which elicited a few French oaths at her stupidity, accompanied by a more intelligible sign, that he wished some meat cooked. The other squaw, who was rolled up in a heap beneath her robe, showed no sign of consciousness but by a dark, sparkling eye, which peeped from below the covering. The one who had been addressed, took no farther notice for a few seconds, and then spoke to her partner in the not too sentimental affections of Auguste, who, throwing off her covering, exhibited the scantily-clothed figure of a girl of fifteen, with well-formed limbs, beautiful hands and arms, and a roguish eye, half concealed by long eyelashes. Tying a band of fresh bark round her brow, she immediately commenced her culinary labors. Cutting up the meat on a piece of skin placed upon her knees, she deposited the disjointed ribs in a kettle, and replenishing the fire, drew from among various packages various dried fruits. Their contents consisted of the *kammas*, which is of a sweet and glutinous nature; the *biscuit-root*, tasting exactly like a New York cracker newly baked; some *tobacco-*

root, *wild potato*, and *service-berry*, which, in fact, is a dwarf pear of a sweet taste, and which, when dried like the currants of *Zante*, forms the most lasting luxury for an Indian dessert.

These, in portions, she set down on the unfurred side of a robe spread in front of one of the beds. Auguste having, by dint of much search in his possible-sack,* found a piece of tobacco as large as a nutmeg, began to mingle a part of it, scraped off, among the dried leaves of the dwarf arbutus, which forms the principal ingredient of Indian fumigation. It is rare that those who voluntarily live the life of savages, omit the smallest part of the customs peculiar to their adopted caste; and poor Auguste was peculiarly careful to neglect nothing of the Indian ceremonial. The three pipefuls were smoked, and the eatables began to claim their share of consideration.

Before they finished their meal, Auguste informed them that he had moved from an abode of greater security to the westward, in order to be nearer the buffalo, when they should come, as they had been driven off by a camp, the signs of which they found a few days back, and which had gone round toward the country of the Crows. This evidently was an indirect question as to whether any information of its movements could be obtained; and Parfin told him at once that the whites he alluded to, would be round the mountain again in a few days. Parfin, knowing that there could be nothing done by his host that could in any way interfere with his own interests, answered frankly every question, and then asked if their horses and mules would be safe from the Chochocoes. Auguste, after learning the spot where they were, vouched for their safety until they should meet some straggling Indians, when it would be better to move them into some place more easily fortified. Having refused all efforts to detain them, and even neglected sly glances of the ladies of the harem, when the proposition was explained that they should be left as hostages for the return of their lord—who offered to inform Jasper of their delay—Parfin and his companion retraced their way, and Auguste returned from the bank of the torrent to his secluded abode. He had informed them that, should there be no buffalo on the plain on the morrow, he should move to his other camp, and leave his horse-pen and concealment for his new friends.

---

* Name given by the mountain men to haversack.

It was late when they slowly wound their way toward their silent camp. Jasper was not there;

and they had to make some search before they found him, just returned from a survey from one of those bare peaks which rear themselves above the pines. He had seen nothing save a ram of the Argali, who sprang across a green glade toward his rocky home, equally wondering and wondered at. The evening was cool, but calm; and though the valley and the plain below, were already involved in the coming shadow of the night, the ridge on which they lay, still borrowed some of the lingering light, that far above, tinted the snowy pinnacles. It was on the edge of the precipice the three sat, each occupied by his own thoughts — the spreading branches of the pine above them in somber repose, and the expanse beneath growing indistinct and dark. Not a murmur was there among those boughs, habitually the dwelling of the howling tempest. It was so still a night, that the ear might have caught the sound of the footfall of the Indian or the breath of the crouching panther; such a calm as invites the ear to listen rather than lulls it with the confidence of repose. The moon had not yet risen; and the mules, full and drowsy, stood the dusky images of sloth. At intervals, high in the middle air, there arose sounds like the sighs of pent-up gales—now coming as if a breeze were sweeping over the chords of some vast Æolian harp—now like a multitude of wings, such as those of birds which, in their migrations, obscure the heavens. Henry, to whose woodsman's ear the sounds seemed familiar, threw himself back, and gazed on the clear blue vault above; but not a speck was visible. It was a strange, supernatural voice, and to a mind of romance might have furnished food for high meditations, though in him it produced but a desire to sleep under influences of a nature more grand and indefinable than he cared to examine. It was not a sound sleep that Parfin enjoyed in his lofty eyrie; once or twice he started up, as he thought he heard something move in the neighborhood of his bed; but turning again, he yielded to that heavy feeling which renders it so hard to watch, even in moments of the extremest danger. The dark form, the cause of that slight noise, had not remained long inactive, but rolled again toward the couch of Parfin, giving but one turn at a time, and then, when he had ascertained that every thing was quiet, another. It was impossible now to approach nearer by the same means of movement, as a rock, half emerged from the turf, intervened. With head close to the ground, at the end of this lay the naked figure of him whose every motion partook of the noiseless caution of the tiger, with the tension of muscle and the perfect balance of one who knew that a flutter lost him. He was now within reach of Parfin; then a breathless pause of examination succeeded, before his hand possessed itself of the horn and ball-pouch of the sleeper; but one part of the cord of the powder-horn was under the arm, as if for security, which also passed over the barrel of his rifle. The knife of the unknown severed the cord, and the horn and the pouch were in the mouth of the retreating figure, which, with the same caution, disappeared behind a tree. It was there, that in the morning, the remains of the ammunition were found; the accouterments, containing one ball and one charge of powder, hung on a branch. Parfin had awoke first, let loose the animals, gathered some of the embers of the evening fire into a heap, and lit his pipe. He sat musing until the first beam of the morning sun touched the top of the *Pilot Butte*, far off in the plain—the beacon of a prairie, where two vast ranges of mountains bound the horizon; and no other guide is necessary to traverse the intervening space. Still, unnecessary caution has given this name to a table-shaped, isolated hill between, the first to attract the horizontal rays that left, as yet, the lower objects around in the dull gray of dawn.

It is rare that a hunter so long neglects his ammunition. Parfin sought for his by his saddle, where he had slept; and then, for the first time, perceived that it was gone. Awaking his companions, who lay still dreaming in their mountain bed, he gave an anxious look at the horses as he continued his search. Perceiving that something had disturbed him, Henry started up, throwing off the covering from his murmuring bed-fellow. They quickly examined their arms and ammunition; and as Parfin had been on the outside of the three, his alone was touched. Just as they had ascertained this, the missing articles were found, and the extent of the loss ascertained. It was evident the theft was perpetrated by some single person, and possibly was the result of necessity. It was lucky, however, that the other two had a plentiful supply; and all that caused them uneasiness was, that their retreat should be known; they therefore, without hesitation, proceeded to arrange for their departure for Auguste's camp.

CHAPTER V.

It might have been about seven o'clock when these three were in the little plain between the lakes, and had already approached the harem of Auguste; but there was no bright eye to welcome—no fair hand to take the rein of their steed. The fire was out, and scarce a vestige showed that there had been a recent habitation. There was something strange in this; but they soon fixed upon another spot on the opposite side, and nearer the torrent they had crossed, where there was a small shelf hollowed out in the hill-side. A short ascent from the plain wound through a thicket, and along a narrow ledge, commanded by an open above. The spot contained sufficient grass for a few days; and, being a safe position, it was now necessary to look out for some meat, as their supplies were nearly exhausted. Having carefully hobbled the horse and mules, and drawn a dead tree across the road, they all three sallied out to look from the opposite height over the plains of the New Fork and Sandy, in hopes of seeing some buffalo, as they preferred hunting in the open to the risk of meeting Diggers while in search of elk or deer in the woods and passes of the mountains.

Passing over the shoulder of the hill between the two lakes, they came upon a piece of tableland between it and another that juts more prominently toward the south. This spot, strangely wild and sequestered, is covered with beautiful little ponds, set in the brightest verdure, and shadowed by the tender foliage of the birch and the quaking ash. It was scarcely the season for the flies, that drive the elk and deer to these cool and secluded baths; yet, on passing near one, a rush through the branches was heard on the opposite side, and a noble hart dashed away from his lair. He was out of shot before they could get a fair view of him; and having then only his hinder parts exposed, there was no shot fired, as the hunter and the Indian ever look upon it as wicked to wound an animal without a chance of getting him. So he went his way, nostrils to the wind, and the mighty beams of his head, already almost at their full growth, laid along his back, while the hunters continued on toward that point from which they expected to ascertain the chance they had of getting meat that day. They had not gone far before they saw a she-bear with two cubs, as large as wolves, which — probably startled by the elk, as the hunters kept the leeward side of the plain, to avoid giving the wind —fled over the ridge to their right, the old one stopping now and then to gaze on the intruders.

"She is also gone," said Parfin. "It is strange," he added, "that no one has ever killed a she-bear with young, although many have been examined at the period that immediately precedes the dropping of their young." "I have heard something to the same effect," answered Henry; "but it is scarcely reasonable to suppose a bear to be different from all other animals of the class, without proof; all that can be made out from the general belief is, that there has been a most successful concealment of pregnancy, which might be a valuable hint in some places." Parfin looked at his companion a moment: "Let it be concealment, let it be deviation, it is strange; but here we are." They had got upon a stony ridge; and below them lay the same view as from their last night's camp, only nearer, and less extended. They sat long on those piles of stone, and gazed into the distance. It was, at last, by a small column of dust that the eye was fixed upon a spot where, after watching a dark shadow, hovering like a cloud on the prairie, it gave unequivocal signs of a herd of buffalo moving in from the southeast. A shout of joy broke from Henry. Parfin remained to watch, and the other two went back for their horses, which had to pass along the larger lake, and then turn to the eastward, at the foot of the bute on which he sat. The two bounded from block to block, and swung from limb to limb, and never paused to rest until they reached the little plain which they had to cross before they mounted the ascent to their own camp; and in a short time Parfin saw them coming briskly round the base of the bute.

The immovable gazer was then turned into the fleet mountaineer; and he sprung down the steep side, over sharp and rugged rocks, with the unerring step of one to whom such paths are familiar. Henry resumed his horse, which he had led, and Parfin was in an instant on his mule. The calm, the consideration, the sloth were all gone. Meat to the hungry and sport to the rover were at hand. The buffalo were really on the move, and had made some progress toward those who were so eager to meet them. On the last height that intervened between them and the plain, they paused beneath the brow, and riding gently up, took a survey of the band, which covered half a mile in length, huddled as if from some general alarm. There is an indefinable excitement on approaching one of these herds unseen, waiting to burst from your concealment and rush into the chase, with banner displayed. The animals appeared recovered from their discomposure, and disposed to settle into tranquillity. Some could be observed in combat, some rolling in the dust, and the leading cow of the gang—short of limb and shaggy like a bull—had lowered her head, and gave signs of browsing among the short and tufted grass which is found among the dwarf sage that covers the plains. It was a moment of anxious suspense whether they would approach nearer, as the westerly wind, eddying among the low butes, prevented the hunters making a circuit to cut them off. "Let us wait; they have too good a start for your mules," observed Henry; "and I want to make sure of that cow; the dépouillie will be worth a race." The horse, already winding the herd, stood with dilated nostrils and ears in continual movement, sharing the suppressed emotion of his rider. Parfin, after a silent survey of a few minutes, exclaimed, with an oath, "They are off!" and driving his long rowels almost to the head in the flank of his mule, she darted round the end of the little bute before the others, whose heads happened to be down, were aware of the cause of this sudden movement; but impetus is easily given to those ready for a start, and they were by his side in a moment.

Something had alarmed the herd, and they were gone in a direction which, in a ship, would be called on a wind—keeping in a slanting direction from the taint, without actually turning away from the breeze. Already three quarters of a mile distant, the pace of the hunters ought to be greatly increased beyond that of the buffalo, in order to gain sufficiently upon them to force one out of the crowd, or, if possible, to dash into the middle of the herd, and shoot down one too closely packed in to get free scope for their full speed, which is wonderful, considering the shape and weight of the animal. Henry found it necessary to let out his willing horse, in order to get up to the herd. There had been no rain recently, and the dust flew in a long cloud behind; and as he neared the flying animals, the small gravel flew in his face like grape-shot, so that it was necessary to change his course, and pass along the side of the band toward the head, where the cow he had singled out, still kept her position—leading with apparent ease, the straining crowd that followed. This change produced a corresponding alteration, of course, in her; and as the wind, now from the side, uncovered the band, he was enabled better to watch her; but in this operation he had to run a much greater distance than those on the other side, who had only a cut-off to make in order to intercept the animals, which had now taken the form of a long string instead of a circular mass. There were two or three shots fired from behind, but Henry did not note the number. They had got into a rocky and uneven space, running between two rivers, where Parfin well remembered, that some years before, a foreigner had killed his first cow in a chase; and where, his horse falling from the dangerous inequality of the ground, one of the party had nearly lost his life. He was now, however, running clear of the herd, and not forced over every thing by the band; but one of those chasms here came in the way which was much too broad to leap, and again they headed to the right. It was now Henry's turn to take the short cut; and he urged his horse to his speed; the chasm ended, and he was again thrown out; but the ground was now good, though a gradual descent, and he, for the first time in his experience of buffalo hunting, found that it pushed a good horse to catch a cow in good condition, with plenty of room down hill. His horse was at his best speed; and though he thought himself approaching, it was not so easily, as he had ran in a poorer cow in a crowd. At last he saw by the turn of her head, that she was becoming sensible of his gain, and he shouted at the prospect of speedily ending the chase. But his was not the only shout. Auguste, naked, the rein on his horse's neck, a coil of cord in his hand, with his bow and arrows, plying his short whip on the flank of his hardy Indian steed—hitherto concealed by the dust—suddenly appeared, a candidate for the same prize. A feeling of rage, such as only the hunter knows when crossed in his chase, came over Henry; and he shouted to his heedless rival that he did not want his help, but wished to kill his cow single-handed. Auguste laughed, and made a sign to go on, taking to another cow that followed next, which was separated from the herd, and which he found alone. Henry was now nearly abreast of the object of his pursuit, and nearing her; but she edged off at his approach, and broke away in a direction after Auguste's. It was now that he took the method which alone succeeds with certainty in running a single cow, unless you tire her out, and kill her at bay. He ran his horse close behind her, and as he came up, reaching over his horse's head, broke her back at the first shot, narrowly escaping a fall over her as she sank in her track. He was quickly down and reloading his gun, when Auguste again came up, and, getting on her back as she lay, stabbed her in the side. "You have yet to kill your cow; come along," he said, as he pointed to his own arrow sticking in her side, which Henry had not before observed. He had not seen either Auguste or her, for the dust, when she had received this shot, and the ravine had separated them afterward. His astonishment therefore, was as great as his rage; and it was well for Auguste that he was mounted and out of reach, still calling on Henry to follow him. It was but a moment before a natural sense of justice showed him that he was wrong, and that, in fact, Auguste had as much right to be angry with him for attempting to take the prize to which he now saw he had the best right. While the cow was still in the agonies of death, he again mounted, and sped to catch up with a portion of the band that were not yet out of reach. Another cow was singled out, which appeared to be of equal speed, but, on being pressed, she was lost in the center of the band.

Henry now, with his blood sufficiently heated, plunged into the thickest of the throng, jostling some, bounding from others whose horns menaced his safety, against others equally dangerous; but still singling out the one on which his eye had never winked, in all the dust and danger of the melée. He was now by her side; and as he would have fired, she, unable to turn away, sprang toward him, almost overthrowing his horse, which just escaped being gored in the charge. Turning to recover his position was a matter of danger, as he had to cross several others; and there would have been an end of his good horse and his hunting that day, had the lunge of a huge bull, whose path he was attempting to cross, taken effect; but another, of even greater size, pushed on by the crowd behind, came against his flank when rushing across his course, and the two bulls rolled on the earth together, the horse clearing their prostrate bodies before the others came up. Henry was now in the wake of the cow; and rushing up to her, he fired so close as to burn the hair on her side.

The run had been a severe one, and Henry pulled up, satisfied that if he had not killed the cow of his first choice, he had got one little inferior. They were on the edge of a high precipice, which forms the eastern side of a rapid stream, flowing from the larger of the two lakes we have mentioned as being near the camp of these wanderers. The wounded cow staggered over its edge with the clouds of dust and the dark mass which plunged down the deep descent. Henry pulled up on the brink; and it was well for him that he had delivered his shot when he did. The band was broken, and dispersed in the timber of the bottom, and he would, in all probability, have lost sight of the animal he pursued. Below, near the edge of a thicket of cherry bushes and spruce, stood his victim, panting with death-sickness, but turned to her foe, who descended the steep by a slanting path. The eternal Auguste was, however, upon him before he reached the bottom, sliding his horse down the side of the bank, too precipitous at that place to descend in any other way. "Shall I finish her for you?" he asked, his respect for Henry increased from having seen him shoot down one cow and stop another at single shots. Henry, whose natural temper was good and generous, nodded assent; and Auguste had alighted, and stole into the thicket, while the chafing animal confronted her former pursuer, who good-naturedly advanced to attract her attention while the operations of Auguste were going on. At last he emerged from behind her, with his belly on the ground; and while her head was turned the other way, he waited his opportunity, and seizing her by the tail, cut one tendon, but failed in severing the other before she threw him off, and turned to charge into the bushes, where he had been cast. Henry now made another advance, the disabled animal making, at the same moment, an ineffectual spring. Auguste again seized the tail, and cut the remaining hock; when, sinking on her haunches, the exhausted victim became an easy prey. Henry tied his horse to her horn, and began the operation of butchering, which, as he only took the fleeces and *depouilliés*, was not a tedious task. Fastening the meat across his saddle, the ends hanging down on either side and the tongue on the pommel, he took his way in search of his companions. Parfin, who was an expert butcher, with the help of Jasper, had already taken the meat of one cow; each had killed one, and they were soon on their way up the side of the Fork. Avoiding the sandy road which runs along behind the fringe of trees that borders the lake, they reached the head, and led their animals up the steep ascent that conducted to their retreat.

It is not to be supposed that there had been no discussion respecting Roallan during all this time, the search after whom appeared to be thus so readily abandoned. Henry had shown Parfin that he could hardly have followed him from the camp without having been seen; nor could it have been his object to shun a party, necessary alike to guide his way and assist his project; and they had determined to remain out until the camp should pass them on their way round the mountain. But had Auguste again slipped from their ken? and was he to be trusted? Henry had some doubts; Parfin, however, said they must either quit that side of the mountain, or take their chance—farther precautions were useless. Jasper had killed a worthless cow, but claimed a fat one, which he could not find, though he saw her fall. "That," said Parfin, "is one of those who *go over the hill and die.* It must be good living on the side they go to!" The youth had heard the expression in the camp, and cared not to discuss the matter farther. It was resolved, before going to bed, to sally out next day, after making a horse-pen, and search for Auguste and the horde of Chochocoes.

By early dawn, several tall pines had been felled, and the inclosure for the horses was completed. The roasts were taken from the fire;

and the delicious meat of the hump ribs furnished them with a repast which, aided by the place, the wild achievement, and the absence of care, was eaten with a relish such as man nowhere else enjoys. The table of short grass, fresh and clean, that peradventure, had never before been trodden by human foot; the crystal rill, the murmur of falling waters, and the undying moan of the winds in the forest shades, invited to quiet repose and enjoyment. Around and below them, lay the resources of the plains and the river, in meat and fish; every thing might be theirs that necessity or luxury required—that the most far-stretching desire might covet, or the most daring enterprise obtain.

It is but seldom that the hunter of the Rocky Mountains goes to any distance on foot. Even the most rugged steeps are surmounted by the goat-like horses of the country; and those newly brought from the settlements, by following a mule, are soon taught to step from block to block along the vast piles, which having, like avalanches, slidden off the cliff above, encumber the slope of the mountain side. Jasper was again left to his own guardianship, as also the remaining mule; and they were to garrison the pen, should there be any appearance of danger. The other two took their way over the rocky hill that lies to the west of the greater lake, and descended into the deep dell through whose shadows glides a smaller stream, where even yet, notwithstanding the ravages of trappers, the peeled willow (the sign of beaver) floats in the dark pools. Up the left bank of this they prosecuted their search for the trail of those who, they naturally supposed, frequented the best pass into this recess, which contained another lake, whose sides are indented with numerous coves and concealments. It was in vain they searched its shores where accessible, and scanned its steeps with careful gaze from beneath the clump of evergreens and aspen, where they dismounted. A beaver lodge still exists on the margin of the lake, and the marks of bears, in digging for roots and insects, show that the dense forest around is not uninhabited; but there was no trace of the presence of man. The distant glaciers shone over the nearer range, and the lake lay still and dark behind the pine-clad hill that lowers between it and the mid-day sun. Lounging here was idle; nothing showed itself, and the opposite side of the lake is impassable farther west than the wooded island. "It is a pity to lose so much good meat for these diggers," observed Henry, as they turned to retrace their way.

The horse-pen had been made with some care, and was tolerably secure. They ate and slept, and at dawn turned out their animals, and sat down to their morning meal, each with his roast before him, on his spit, stuck in the ground.

CHAPTER VI.

About eight on the following morning, in a small grove of aspen on the western border of the larger lake, lying still to the west of the one last mentioned, two men, who had just landed from a small boat composed of raw bull-hide stretched over a frame of willow, were sitting on the grassy bank that marks the highest limits of the waves, a broad margin of coarse sand intervening, upon which might be traced a cougar's track of no ancient date, the sole imprint it bore since the washing of the latest storm. They were apparently contemplating the mirror before them, in which the sublime landscape was reversed, but scarcely appeared to reach the bottom of the deep blue water. The two were about of equal age; both young, with scanty beards of a month's date, fair long hair, blue eyes, straight limbs, enveloped in leggins of white blanket, with a broad fly on either side, being originally cut as two oblong pieces, the seam along keeping the shape of the limb, and the residue standing out, forming what I have termed flies. These were supported by straps fastened to the waist-belt, and the leather hunting-shirt covered the intervening space. In these men were blended the sun-burned skin of exposure with the ruddy freshness of youth; and there was no mistaking the high and reckless bearing of the native of the Western state, gradually removed from Europeanism as it has encroached upon Virginia, and even Kentucky. It may be questioned if there is another such race in the world as is to be found in the State of Missouri—a people driven to the bounds of cultivation, to be enabled to retain, as long as possible, the free and simple manners of their fathers. "We may chance to light on them to-day, I think, and get some tobacco," said the taller to his companion, after examining the sand of the beach, and the branches on either side the small opens that led through the fringe of currant, birch, and willow that lined the shore between the grove of aspen and the little bay. "It must either be that, or some one will have to look out for Dripp's people, when they come on to open the cache; but you think it best to take them to the Kennion if we meet?" "Yes," replied the other, "we have but that, or to make a raise by force. We can get what they have; and I am sure Parfin is never without a supply; he is too much of an Indian to be caught without tobacco, and vermilion, and a spare knife or two, were he only out for a night. He is a strange one, that Parfin," he added, after a moment's pause. "No one knows what he is; but his dark skin never has deceived me; he is no Indian born." "I think he may be a Spaniard," rejoined his companion; "but he knows the ways of the Indians better than they do themselves, and almost all the languages. You have heard he was offered a thousand dollars as interpreter on the Maria. Auguste says he has two 'greenhorns' with him, one a top-sawyer, and mules which are only second to a first-rate horse. He saw them all run the day before yesterday, when he brought in the fat meat he cheated one of them out of. Let us get the bull-boat ashore; she is grinding on the sand while we wait, and there is no sinew to mend her, if she wears a hole through one of her lean ribs." They approached the light barque, and their united effort hauled it high and dry on the beach.

There was a buffalo path near, which led from the lower end of the lake thus far along its western shore, and then took its course over the heights through the woods and valleys, where there is rich and quiet pasture, toward another lake; but there is no passage farther along the shore. Huge disjointed blocks of granite, or perpendicular cliffs, form headlands, between which there are bays, until the waters are confined by solid walls hundreds of feet high, which hang over the upper and inaccessible part of the lake. The path before mentioned, passes through the little grove of aspen, where the slightest sound might announce an approach, under which the two hunters now laid themselves, and sank into that state of quiet, partaking as much of watchfulness as repose. A single antelope passed along the hill-side above, with a startled air. "They are not far off," said one of the hunters, but without even looking toward the path; and, indeed, it was not long before two men appeared, threading the narrow track between blocks of granite; the one in front humming an Indian air, and he behind, a ruddy youth, gazing with unaccustomed eye upon the cliffs above, while his mule followed the careful steps of the one before. They were close upon the hunters, and had not perceived them until one of them said, "I thought Parfin had kept his eyes skinned to wear his scalp so long in the Indian country." "I have been always in luck to be caught napping only by friends," was the reply. The two dismounted, let their mules loose with the ropes trailing, and seated themselves by those already stretched below the shade. There were many questions Parfin wished to put, but he knew those he had to deal with were out of tobacco, and that they would expect the Indian custom to be adhered to, of smoking before council. Notwithstanding the effort made by both to conceal it, the furtive glance at every motion of their companions betrayed their anxiety on this score; and when, at last, Parfin, as if by accident, laid hold of his tobacco sack, one of them actually began to strike fire with the back of his butcher-knife and a flint arrow-head he took from his pocket. With a smile, Parfin produced the luxury desired, and asked if they were out. "Not quite," was the answer; "one of the half-breeds has a piece of an old pipe-stem, which makes tolerable good smoking. You have come up with a new company, or have joined them, I hear," he rejoined (a cloud of smoke issuing from his mouth), after he had handed the pipe to his companion. "There is a company come up, but I do not believe they intend to stay in the country. Altowan and I have been to look at them; but the bourgeois has gone off after a squaw, and this youth, who came with him from the old country, is out in the hope of picking up some news of him. It is an ugly chance, however." "Did you not hear," said the shorter of the two, addressing his companion, "that some of the Flatheads and half-breeds had gone across Lewis's Fork with a white stranger?" "There was such a report the other day, but I scarcely believed it."

Jasper sprang from the spot where he had thrown himself down at some little distance, and approached the group, showing an interest in the report which lighted up his round face with an appearance of intelligence and animation. The trapper looked at him with a smile, and said, "You need not think to catch him, for all that; and the news I give, if true, is more likely to prepare you to hear of his hair being raised, than that there is a prospect of your finding him. He was going the wrong road for safety for himself or those who seek him." The other, who seemed to have more reserve, added, "Have you hinted what might be the cause of his journey to any one?" "We might have let Auguste understand as much," was the reply. The trapper mused in silence, and then asked if they were disposed to go to their fort, which he described as a place almost inaccessible. Parfin at once declared his willingness. "You must send your mules to our park, where there is a guard, and where the Chochocoes have never penetrated, and I will take you by water to see the rest of the boys." Parfin, who knew whatever happened regarding the animals could be arranged from funds he had at command, and, for the rest, having no doubt of his personal safety and that of his companion, acceded to this proposition, although there was something of mystery in the events of the last two days, which he thought savored of a gang of freebooters. He rose however, without hesitation, and prepared to embark with the taller, whose name was *White Jim;* while the other—*Will Brunt*—prepared to lead off the two mules.

Jasper would have remonstrated, but a sign from Parfin prevented him; and the power of knowledge and experience in that country, more than in any other, exerts its sway over the helpless stranger to its ways. They leaped into the boat as soon as it had been floated round to a large stone that extended to the margin of the deep water. Parfin took a paddle, and with Jem, soon propelled the light skiff into the deep blue water; and shaping their course to the left, round a headland, cut across a smaller bay, and skirting a rugged and broken beach, came under the perpendicular cliff, that now bounded all that could be seen of the upper part of the lake.

Not a word had hitherto been uttered. They sat rapt in admiration of the scene, as the boat glided over the dark and silent waters. The Ospray once sailed over their heads, and once again the Eagle took his majestic flight across the narrowed sky; there were no other signs of life. Nearing the cliff that hung over them on the left, they almost swept its base, the water black as night. There was now a crack in the rock, which seemed to be rent; and formed, apparently, a narrow passage, accessible by a little cove with a gravelly landing, which was obstructed with shrubs and dwarf pines. An hour of the sun at morning was all the ray that ever cheered its gloom; and that had passed, and left it in shadow. They glided by, and there was again the wall of overhanging granite, and the distant peak of snow on the mountain far above and beyond. They turned quickly to the left, and found a second cove, larger than the first; and to a look from Parfin, his fellow-rower bent his head in sign that they were here to land. The boat was broached to on the sand, between two great blocks, and they silently lifted it from the water.

The spot on which they were, seemed as if a portion of the cliff of about half an acre, in the shape of a theatre, had sunk down, leaving all the rock frowning around, without an outlet but by the lake. There was a green sward, and a few pines that would have appeared large in any other situation; but they were oppressed by the greater features around, until they wore the look of shrubs; they were thinly scattered, and their branches hung to the ground; huge blocks of rock lay scattered over the level space, and a cool fountain bubbled over the slimy side of the rock into a basin of gravel. On the left hand several dead trees had been flung over from above, to serve as fuel; and at the farther end, where grew a few pines more closely together than the rest, there was a slight smoke, and meat was hung up over the fire, on a scaffold, to dry. The intruders had advanced some way with their guide, and had leisure to observe what we have noted of the place, before they were perceived. The barking of a dog first gave notice of their approach; when, from various quarters, were raised figures of strange appearance, some white, some Indian, with a Spaniard or two, and a shriveled old Canadian. The visitors were received with the welcome that men give to any thing new in situations of seclusion, and under the influence of expectation; and it was not long ere the usual inquiries were commenced as to goods having arrived, or any new company having started. Dried meat was put before them; and one American, who had been a clerk in Cincinnati, asked if they had brought a newspaper. Parfin, after looking at him, said to Jem, "He will be your hunter, that politician, I reckon." "Yes," answered Jem, with a smile. "Have you heard of the party that went with Jacques to the Utes?" asked Parfin. "They have left him; they were mostly men who did not like to be out of the buffalo country." "What, all?" "Yes; I understand he has lost his good name, and Cumarowa is tired of him." "We have heard nothing of late," was the reply. "And Jem Bridgee?" "Oh! we left him on Otter Creek; he's an animal that lights on his legs at every cast; he knows every creek in the mountains, and can smell his way where he can't see it. There has been a skirry or two about horses; but, except a man killed on the Yellow Stone, and one drowned in crossing Lewis's Fork, they have met with nothing particular. The blood Indians are to have a thousand lodges on the Horse Plains; and I think we shall hear of some trouble before Jem leaves Salt River Valley to come to rendezvous. There was some story about Joe Knight being attacked when the trappers were out of camp; but I do not know the right of it." "I did not hear of it," rejoined Parfin. "What did you learn?" "Why, all we heard was, that he was camp-keeper to some of the boys who were out on some of the sources of the Missouri above the Three Forks; they had gone to their traps, and he lay in his shanty abed, and was awoke by something, looked out, and saw a robe!—broke, leaped into the river, body and soul, and made a straight shirt-tail across the prairie on the other side! The Indians—if Indians there were—had been as much scared as himself; and when the others came back, they found nothing touched, and saddled up before Joe came back, who said he believed he had scared them very much, as he had cached within range." "Well, and old Gabe is as obstinate as ever?" still inquired Parfin. "Oh, yes; you heard of John Dawkins telling him he had made a bad encampment, commanded from a hill behind. Gabe said it was as strong as a camp could be; he had chosen it on purpose. John rejoined that he would take the works with an old gray stone. Jem defied him; John started up the hill, and rolled a huge rock down, which went through a lodge, broke a gun, and if it had not been brought up by a nest of kettles and a bale of meat, would have killed a Canadian. Charley Town made a song about it. Two of the lines were,

'The rock rushed down with a mighty din,
And *broke a gun* and *a Frenchman's skin.*

Gabe went to his lodge and smoked, but had the gun, and kettles, and the Frenchman put down in the books to Dawkins's account. The Frenchman was valued at ten dollars."

Parfin turned to the clerk, who had inquired for news, and told him that Gabe and *Louis Phillippe* had acted in the same way, only that the French king, in his account against the Mexicans, had valued the Frenchmen higher. The old Canadian pricked up his ears, and Parfin continued: "If you go to Mexico, look out, Baptiste, or the French consul will have you killed to swell his account; you would be worth many thousand dollars there." The old man's eyes kindled, and he said something very grand in imperfect English; the Spaniards laughed; and as wearing out a subject is not one of the defects of mountain conversation, the matter dropped. During the day, the boat came and went twice; and there was a supply of elk meat and argali, and the Indian children brought in some of those beautiful red trout with which the lake abounds. The sun had got round well to the west when Will Brunt returned; and, having had some conversation with a gigantic Canadian called Le Duc, accompanied White Jim to the borders of the water, where they sat down. In the mean time the feast went on—that continual eating which takes place when there is plenty, by way of indemnity, in advance for probable privation to come.

The two squaws of Auguste were at their fire, the prettiest of whom, wearing a more serious air than when they last met, cast once or twice her bright glance toward Parfin and his companion. On one occasion, when their dark lids were raised, and her lustrous eyes were unveiled, Jasper found them fixed on his. The look was calm and steadfast, and after a moment withdrawn. There were several persons present, and none could have noted any thing of intelligence in the momentary gaze; and yet there was that in it to rivet the attention more than the most unequivocal blandishments. That dark mask worn over orbs living with expression has ever something more remarkable in it than the most vivid animation. If Jasper had been fascinated with the joyous and almost inviting looks of the Indian girl when he first arrived—if he had admired the beautiful round limbs, and small feet, and taper fingers—it was the transitory feeling of a sailor boy, who had, during his short life, seen much beauty in many different climes, where his ruddy cheeks and sanguine temperament, procured him the notice and caresses of the inhabitants of the voluptuous South; yet he had never experienced the sensation, almost akin to fear, with which his mind was now subdued by the wild creature before him.

Most of the men lay on the ground near the fire; and, as we remarked before, there seemed to be a separate communication between some of them; but, on the whole, the conversation, though intermingled with oaths and imprecations, was light and general. There was nothing low or debased in these rangers of the sequestered streams and recesses of the mountains. Long abstinence from spirituous liquors and a short allowance of tobacco created an impatient expectation of the coming of supplies; when, amid the fumes of the medicine-pipe, they could also quaff the forbidden spirit, and, while their credit might last, indulge in bright dreams and mighty imaginations.

It was toward evening, and but for the fires, the spot in which they were shadowed would have been cold as well as gloomy. By degrees, the male part of the party had disappeared, and a few Indians alone remained with old Baptiste and the strangers. A man who carries his bed on his saddle, and expects his horse to course down the hart and the bison, for his amusement or his support, may be supposed not to overload himself with defenses from the cold; so that Parfin was not sorry to see the squaws of Auguste place, in addition to his blanket, a large robe of a young bison bull by his saddle, as they were losing sight of the last light of the sun, reflected against a far-off eastern peak. Parfin was not without distrust, as he was well aware that there was no boat, and that they—the two new-comers—were alone with a parcel of diggers of the band of the bad Gauchée.* Placing, therefore, his rifle by his side, and not pulling off his powder-horn or ball-pouch, he laid himself down with the appearance of repose, but with a spirit oppressed by a sense of the helplessness of his situation. "I have been in a worse strait, and have, however, come through," he thought to himself, as he tried to combat the fears which he could not prevent from crowding upon him. It was too early for sleep, and he had lain down to show his confidence, as well as to reflect on his danger. Jasper was by the fire; and as its red gleam shone on his face, Parfin thought he could perceive some symptoms of the anxious attention with which he viewed the movements of the two squaws of Auguste. At last the fire began to wane, and Jasper reluctantly came toward the shanty where lay his companion. The Indians lay at some little distance, in suspicious quiet, and all seemed hushed.

---

* A Chochocoe chief, whose band have been considered bad Indians. They are mostly on foot; and part of them inhabit, occasionally, the valleys of the Mountains of the Winds.

It was, perhaps, the end of the first watch, though here they kept no guard. The wind, which had been gradually rising, now blew strong —at intervals chasing the white clouds from the north, and sweeping in gusts over the heaving lake; and the moon had passed round, and left the cove to the shadows of its frowning walls. Jasper slept, and Parfin feigned to be buried in repose, but anxiously watched for any movement that might be made. A figure was approaching, and his hand was on the pistol; and though his arm was thrown across his eyes, he could see beneath. The figure neared, and he thought he could recognize the light form of *Tona*, the young squaw of Auguste. She paused, and seemed attentively to consider whether they slept, and then passed round to the side on which Jasper lay. It was now that Parfin felt assured that there was some serious cause for alarm, as he heard the distant hum of an Indian song slowly murmured, but distinct, in which more voices than one were joined; and the Indian girl dropped down as she heard the sound, and for a moment lay as if undecided what to do—looking toward the sleepers and then in the direction of the sounds, until she appeared satisfied that they were not heard. The covering of the shanty had been previously raised on each side; but there was no movement visible, nor any sound but that low and ill-omened song. Tona now laid her hand gently on the arm of Jasper, and he started on his elbow, but was restrained, if he intended to utter his surprise, by a gesture of caution. Drawing her finger across his forehead at the root of his hair, she pointed expressively to the quarter from which came, at intervals, the low, dirge-like hum; and without waiting for any attempt to answer, she then made a signal that she was going toward the lake, and that they should follow. The look of Jasper, to see whether his companion slept, was answered by a request to follow. Drawing herself along the ground, the girl had got to the side of the still slumbering embers of the fire; and motioning that they should take another direction, she busied herself in heaping wood upon it, so as—though obscuring it for a moment—it might blaze up after a while.

They were, by different roads, now all three moving, on their hands and knees, toward the water—Parfin last, turning round at every few paces to watch. There was a spot they had to traverse that was perfectly bare; and at one point, looking from the Indian fires, persons moving over it would be seen against the lake. The young guide, on coming to this bare space, changed her direction, and the two fugitives here joined her. She pointed to the fire, round which, it might be supposed, several figures lay, though only one was visible sitting; but they had got out of reach of the low sounds that they had heard, and crouched down to observe if nothing stirred; but all was quiet, and they crept to the base of the cliff, and if not already observed, to comparative security. Along the foot of the rock, a short green sward and occasional gravel, formed a path unobstructed by tree, or even shrub;

and along this they moved swiftly, but with cautious silence. They were now near where the wall by which they were inclosed, ends in the depths of the lakes; but there was no boat. Parfin had quickened his pace to lay hold of Tona; but his ear was attracted by the sound of voices; and on looking back, he could perceive several Indians moving round one of the fires. Tona had also seen this appearance of commotion, and she darted on to the brink of the water, closely followed by her companions. There was hitherto something in the manner of the Indian girl which had evinced composure and confidence; but now she was evidently hurried, and there was scarcely time to remark the change before they were upon the water's brink. A few hurried words and signs passed between her and Parfin, and she plunged into the lake up to her middle. Jasper, by a sign from his comrade, followed. The ledge upon which they found themselves ran along the base of the rock; and, by signs, Tona made Jasper understand that a deviation would plunge them into unknown depths. It was but a short way that the water on the rock, which served them for a footing, was so deep as at the first entrance; and as they followed the uncertain path, which, like a low-water quay now covered, scarcely reached mid-leg, they were obliged to steady themselves by the hand next the rock, as, in many places, it shelved off so suddenly as to make the footing uncertain.

We have before said, that though there was a moon, it was too late to derive advantage from it, and that side of the lake was in rapidly-deepening shadow; but there was a new danger, besides the deep and agitated waters. Hearing distinctly the sounds of those who searched, if not pursued, they had proceeded upward of a hundred yards—Jasper following, step by step, the movements of Tona, and Parfin following his—when a near and louder yell indicated that the manner of their intended escape had been discovered, and rendered necessary all the speed which the doubtful nature of their path would permit. They could already hear the words of their pursuers over the roar of the surging waters; and Parfin had almost made up his mind that it was better to stand and defend the pass along the rocks than attempt farther flight, when he found himself under a block of stone which obstructed their path. It was the barrier of another haven. From the top, as he prepared to slide down after those who had gone before, he could also distinctly see Tona employed in attempting to move a bull-boat hauled up on the beach. Jasper's aid and his own, when he got down, soon effected this; but there was no oar. It was a desperate moment, and Tona at once sunk under a feeling of despondency, when Parfin, taking her up in his arms, flung her into the boat. A piece of drift-wood, grasped almost by accident on the beach in shoving off the boat, furnished a sort of paddle to one of the crew; but, regardless of all but the danger behind, they launched out on the now stormy lake, while the Indians were scarcely fifty paces from the spot. There were at least a dozen of men, besides boys; and their yell rose high and shrill over the strife of elements, as the dark mass was driven at a short distance past them. "Paddle for your lives," said Parfin, as he strained, with inefficient means, to gain an offing. The wind was strong, and the waves were breaking over the gunwale of the skiff; and his two companions, leaning down with each an arm over the side, tried to make up for the want of paddles by plying the strokes of their hands with redoubled velocity. "Let him who fears not the deep nor the power of the stranger, follow; we have but one oar, and the Snakes swim strong." "Yes; and they have sent one sure messenger," added Jasper, as

Tona fell lifeless in the bottom of the boat; a ball had struck her in the head; and the survey satisfied him that she was dead. A sign was made by his companion that her body was to be thrown over to lighten the filling boat; but Jasper could not look on that sweet face, with all its fire quenched, and commit her coldly to the waters. A choking sensation came upon him; and though he had raised the lifeless form to obey the sign, he could not prevent himself from feeling a hesitation; but hearing another shot, and the expostulation of his comrade in danger, he imprinted one kiss upon those lips that had scarcely lost their smile, and heaved her into the foaming waves. The frail barque rode somewhat lighter, even from the loss of that slight form; but the arrows came in showers, and there was a leak from a ball-hole, while every moment of delay, within reach of so certain an aim, was to be avoided. "Let her fill," was the answer of Parfin; but another shot-hole, and a moment must be spent to stop them, or they would have to swim, and lose their arms, even if they saved their lives. A piece of a hunting-shirt was crammed into each; and again the hands of Jasper followed each other's strokes on the side farthest from danger, and Parfin, at the starboard bow, attempted to guide her away from the shore they had quitted.

A gust, stronger than before, now drove the filling boat down the lake; but there were no more reports of firearms. If arrows were sent after them, they no longer arrived; and they drove along over the maddening waves. Their attention, before directed to saving themselves from other dangers, was now required to bail out the water that the continually-breaking waves sent over the sides of the boat; but the wind was less violent as the space became less confined, and they hailed with delight the headland they were driving upon, near where they had first embarked in the morning. It was rounded with involuntary speed, and the moon shone through the trees on the yellow sand, where, luckily, the wind seemed inclined to throw them. Crouching on their feet, ready for a spring, with their arms in their hands, they leaped out as the boat touched, and bounded through the surf. "We are safe till morning, when they will get a boat or raft. I think it is too cold and too far to swim, and they could not carry any arms; so, once more, I trust we are safe," said Parfin, giving vent to his thoughts in a sort of soliloquy. Time was not to be lost, however, in idle musings. The blanket that each had carried, though wet, would still afford some covering; and heaped twigs of the birch and pine would form a ready and perfumed couch. Their saddles remained where they had been left, and midnight found them buried in sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

Mean while a scene of another kind had taken place at the high and secluded plain where the horses of the party were kept, and where the mules of their visitors had been taken. Contrary to custom and prudence, the whites, with whom was Auguste, slept at some distance from the horses, in a small fort, which was in perfect preservation, and had been used, as its construction indicated, by some party of Blackfeet on a recent expedition.

Two Sandwich Islanders, who had been seduced from their home, and were treated like slaves, were left to guard the horse-pen, and to give an alarm if attacked, while the fire of the white men blazed in the obscure recess of an adjoining rock, and was loaded with kettles of meat, and surrounded by roasts, fruits of the yesterday's hunt. A few beaver-skins, stretched on hoops, hung on the neighboring trees; and an Indian lodge had been laid down as a couch, under the shelter of one of the overhanging sides. It appeared from the conversation, that they were all to proceed next day to "make a raise," as they termed it, on the stranger camp, where their debts to others would be unknown, and the few beaver they had, would serve as an earnest of the produce of the fall hunt, which they proposed to mortgage. Parfin, who knew them, it was their intention to leave in the Indian hiding-place; and having removed his mules, they were not to be returned until too late for him to interrupt their negotiations with Stay.

All this being in train, and their hopes high, they supped in all the glee of dazzling prospects and expected revel, and laid themselves down to rest; those who had squaws promising them bright ornaments, and the means of indulging in gambling—the only passion to which they give unlimited sway—while the unusual blandishments and caresses which the women lavished on their lords, showed that it was a part of their system to impress upon them how much the charms of their connection were to be enhanced by liberality. Their round, bronze arms, were thrown around the white necks of their mates; and their eyes, usually turned down, were directed, in wanton brilliancy, in search of a returning glance.

It was scarcely dawn, but a faint streak from the height on which the fort was placed might be distinguished on the eastern horizon, when a figure of doubtful appearance, crept from beneath the low portal of the fort, and crouching for a moment, to watch if it had been observed, again proceeded toward an adjoining thicket, with noiseless and stealthy pace. It was not long ere it appeared before the sleeping horse-guards; and a moment's survey might satisfy any one they slept. The figure passed on, and, letting down a tree that had been placed in two forks across the gap, to serve as a gate, entered the inclosure where the horses had been confined for the night. After a short search, the two mules from Stay's camp were selected, and ropes having been put in their mouths, were quietly led out, and the barrier replaced. The noise however, that was made by those which remained, in token of their desire to be released, had roused the Islanders, and they were at the gate as a tall figure appeared in the act of opening it. He was questioned about letting out the horses, and answered that the strangers had taken out their mules, and the whites would not start till late; so he was sent to let the animals feed a short time before catching up. The guards acquiesced, and Le Duc—for it was he—mounting one of the horses, followed the band toward the meadow on which they were wont to pasture, rushing them down the hill, and swinging his lasso over his head. Easily believing that he would take their duty from them for a time, the Cannackers, as they were commonly called, set themselves quietly about reviving their fire; and shaking the dust of various bags into their pipes, and rolling themselves in their robes, laid down to enjoy a little ease and warmth, to which their life of drudgery made them almost a stranger. It was not long, however, to be uninterrupted, as some two or three of the freemen came to inquire what they did there, and why they were not with the band. They answered that they had got the big white man to take care of the animals while they lighted their fire, and that as soon as they had eaten something, they would go down and relieve him. The two men who had come up with the intention of starting before the rest, looked at each other, but neither spoke. In a moment after, as if actuated by the same alarm, they hurried down through the thinly-scattered trees, and stood on the rich plain where they had hoped to find the baggage-animals and the running-horses, which were the pick of the mountains, and rendered this little company of free trappers the most independent, as well as the richest men of their class in the wide regions in which they roamed. There were nearly forty coursers, besides mules of great speed and beauty, that they had last night counted in their pride, all with shining coats and lofty crests. They had prepared yellow and red clays to paint them on their progress to meet the stranger camp. The bridles had been ornamented with embroidered porcupine and beads; the gay housings had been prepared; and the eagle's feathers had been placed in the tails of the swiftest steeds, in token that in the chase, it was the only mark that could be seen by the crowd behind.

There was a deep brook that wound through that small plain, whose sluggish waters were occasionally dammed up by barriers of gravel, over which it brawled its way to fall into a lower level. Mechanically they walked to one of these, where fresh tracks on the frosty grass showed them that the band had passed. The trail here collected, and the crossing was marked by signs of crowding and speed; the turf was cut up, and the tracks now appeared to bear toward the opening to the lower country. The men pushed on, still amid confirming signs of flight, till they stood upon a brink from whence a more extensive view of the smaller hills and slopes below, might be obtained. The sun was rising, and there was light to see whatever might be moving within the range of the eye; but there were no signs of life, and there even appeared an unwonted stillness in all around. They had paused some time, not willing yet to believe that they were desolate; but a distant shout, and a momentary view of a band of animals passing over a height, with the sun shining on their backs, confirmed their worst fears; for those they saw were speeding over the rugged path that leads toward the country of the Blackfeet.

Meanwhile Auguste, respecting the character of guest in Parfin and Jasper, had carried off their mules to a place of safety; he had taken from them what powder he required during a previous night, and also some tobacco; and thus he considered them under his protection, and, by means of watching, discovered that *Le Duc* was in communication with some strange Indians lurking in the neighborhood, with whom, in fact, he had arrived the day before.

Parfin and his companion were slowly tracing the steps of the mules which had been taken from them the day before; the trail was difficult, but, the line having been made out, they had only then to proceed to the most evident passes round the shoulder of the hill they were under, and there, in the softer places, look again. They were proceeding with this intent, when they perceived Auguste coming toward them, with his wonted light step, stumbling over the bushes and rocks that lay in his way. Accosting them, he offered to guide them to the place where their mules had been taken. It was in a small valley, the entrance to which was almost impervious. They sat down, and Auguste, as on a former occasion, gave them the hint they required, by lighting a match of tow and preparing his pipe. He had given away all the tobacco he had received before, and awaited, with his cunning smile, a fresh supply. They had smoked a pipe before Parfin thought it time to tell him of the loss of his favorite young wife.

There is something more than commonly affecting in the change from reckless gayety to grief; the lines of unwonted thought and sadness, sit ill where smiles have hitherto dimpled the rounded cheek and beamed from the laughing eye. The feelings of poor Auguste, so rarely reached by misfortune or saddened by care, were wounded to the quick by the loss of his light-hearted Tona. He told Parfin to make the best of his way to the camp; and, making a sign that he was not to be followed, disappeared through the tangled boughs of an adjoining thicket. It was afterward known that he—who, according to his own phrase, "had not sense to be a coward" — wandered about alone for many days, shedding tears and lamenting aloud his loss.

The earth, says the Indian, receives gratefully the tear dropped on its bosom in sorrow for the departure of one of her children; and the bravest are not ashamed to wail aloud for the loss of those whom they have loved. At night the forlorn youth, when driven by hunger, came to the camp of the trappers, and took what he wanted of their meat; and being known to the few dogs they had, was never disturbed by them; but his reason, before shaken by the affair of Idalie, was now much impaired; and when he came to rendezvous, he went about almost unheeded, gambling and shooting at a mark with the youths of the Chochocoes.

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE are two ranges of mountains, a long day's ride apart, through which Wind River forces itself in a northern direction, not in the usual form of a valley, but right across each, through a chasm in some places of a thousand feet in perpendicular height. The first of these forms the northern boundary of the valley where we left the camp of Roallan, in a former chapter; and the second, much higher and more rugged, is the last mountain scenery on its far-flowing waters. The last tributary it receives, just before entering the chasm by which it passes the second range, is called Stinking River, from its having burst its banks on the breaking up of the ice, and brought down whole herds of buffalo, and deposited them on islands and wood-rifts—polluting the air of the valley for the whole season with their putrid remains. It was on this river, after having crossed it a mile from its mouth, that we again find Altowan, accompanied by Pinatsi. There had been daylight for the crossing; and among the fallen timber, which every where encumbers its banks, and marks the situation of former camps and horse-pens, they stopped for the sake of repose. Their horses, of which each had two, appeared fagged with travel; and their riders wore an air of more seriousness, if not gloom, than we have heretofore observed. After hoppling their horses, they each proceeded on foot to reconnoiter the neighborhood; where, judging from the trail they had followed, they expected to find the stopping-place of the party they followed.

We have already mentioned that Watoe had made some communication to Altowan, which induced him to leave the lodge of Roallan. On the brink of the river he perceived a figure, which, upon approaching, he found to be the Ree squaw, who, leaping down the broken bank, placed herself on a fragment of turf and soil which lay under it, on the edge of the water. A short conversation might have been held by those who know the same language, without the appearance of secrecy; but the Ree understood the Blackfoot but imperfectly, and it was, therefore, necessary to be more at ease, and out of the way of observation. It appeared from what Altowan could learn, that actuated by some hidden cause, she wished to inform him that there was a plan for carrying off Idalie by the Elk-head, and to advise him not to take the trail of the rest of the party, but to meet them at the Yellow Stone Lake. The information was given in such a way as to lead Altowan to doubt its truth, and disregard the warning. Giving her the blanket he had thrown over his shoulders, he thanked her, and contented himself with watching in the neighborhood of her shanty all night. It was his intention to have informed Montalt on the evening following; but her own movements threw her in the way of danger before he thought it worth while to warn her of it; and the information of the Ree having thus far proved correct, and some circumstances coming to his memory to account for her evident desire to thwart the carrying off of Idalie, he put sufficient faith in the rest, to follow on the Crow trail toward the Big-horn River, and allowed Roallan and Montalt to take that of the Blackfoot party.

Having followed the traces of the Crows across the first range, they were found to cross the river immediately after the last rocks, about fifteen miles from where we now find them, on Stinking River; but, by a diligent search, the tracks of a few horses were discovered to have come out again, a little lower down, and it had not been difficult to trace them on. They now separated, to hunt for the signs by which they hoped to ascertain who had passed, and how far they were ahead. In a direction down the stream, Pinatsi proceeded to hunt among the buffalo bushes for the appearances of recent foot-tracks or traces of an encampment, but in vain; and he was about returning, when a rush and crash of branches brought his wandering thoughts home to a feeling of personal danger. For a moment it was impossible to ascertain the nature or direction of the sound; and before he had time to recover from his surprise, a huge bear, of what is called the *grizzly* species, had bounded out into the open, and rising for a moment on his hind legs, regarded the intruder, who leveled his rifle; but, having been wet in crossing the river, it missed fire. There was not a moment to lose. This ferocious animal often attacks men unprovoked; and his strength and tenacity of life are almost incredible: but by a wise ordination of Providence, he is unable to climb; and thus have the lives of those who roam in the same regions, often been preserved, when the best arms and the most dangerous wounds, have failed to produce a disabling effect. Pinatsi had hardly time to throw his gun into a thick bush of willow, and gain a sufficient height to be out of reach, when his pursuer was at the foot of the small tree he had ascended, foaming with rage, and threatening to tear it up by the roots.

The rage of such an animal within a few feet, inspires a creeping terror in the bravest, although conscious of safety; and Pinatsi experienced a sensation of dread, not altogether unreasonable, considering the frailty of his support and the efforts of his terrible foe. He had remained in this situation for some time, and the sun was fast sinking behind the distant hills, when a sudden turn of the head and look of alarm, indicated that the animal smelled something in the evening breeze to divert his attention, if not excite his terror. For a few seconds he snuffed the air with uncertainty; and then, turning abruptly, fled with his peculiar long bound, looking behind as he swayed from side to side in his retreat, until he plunged into the thick buffalo bushes that bound the glade, where he had hardly disappeared before Altowan emerged from the opposite side. It was his wind that had delivered his friend. The bear, like all other wild animals, has an instinctive dread of a concealed foe; and though he has been known to come into the middle of a camp, and carry off a man from the fire, he will on all occasions fly from the scent of one who is concealed from his sight. There was an expression of surprise, succeeded by a smile, that for a moment lighted up the dark eyes of Altowan, as he saw his faithful friend perched in the tree before him; but he comprehended the cause. "You might have fired," he said, "without awakening any thing." "If my gun had gone off," was the reply. "But he has not been prowling here for nothing; we will find something among these bushes." They cautiously entered where there seemed no indication of an open; but proceeding on, they at last discovered, amid almost impervious boughs, a small, round space, where the fire of a few hours previous still burned, and the grass was eaten close, and the horse tracks were still fresh. "We must to horse again," said Altowan; "we may catch them at the foot of the pass;" and they proceeded to catch up and saddle their horses.

The distance was not great, and the moon yet young. There were but two roads across the mountains, and Altowan decided to take the one to the right, as on it there is good grass and camping to the very base; while the other is a waste of dark, ashy dust, and rocks of hopeless sterility. They had proceeded until they found a small stream that issues from the foot of the pass and winds toward the river. Between its shrubby banks, at about half a mile from the foot of the rocks, they again tied their horses to pickets, in the most concealed spot they could find.

The night was perfectly calm, and the little stream ran clear at their feet, lingering in self-formed pools, where it had not been obstructed by the now untenanted dams of the beaver. The spirit of the mountain, however, slept not; and his mighty voice might be heard in the mournful but distant blast. There was the solemnity of stillness amid the grandest objects of nature; and there was in the hearts of the two, a feeling in unison with it. An affection which had colored the life of Altowan, led him to the most desperate efforts to regain its object; and all the love of a sworn brother, carried on his companion in his career; but the undertaking was full of risk to its fair object, as well as of danger to those who would attempt her recapture. The pause was that which precedes the desperate and the mighty deed in man, and the storm and convulsion in nature. Overmatched in numbers and equalled in skill, an open attack was, for every reason, to be avoided; and the anxiety that crowded the brow of the lover, was caused by the difficulty of parting from his friend, and encountering the hazard of the undertaking alone.

Contemplating the best means of breaking his intention to Pinatsi, he had sat for some time in gloomy abstraction, when the sharp cry of the medicine wolf* pierced the surrounding gloom with its ominous notes. "Hark! it comes again," cried Altowan, as he started on his feet. "Pinatsi, I must alone to this exploit; by force we can do nothing; but I may be able to find a way alone, where two would be discovered. If you can be of use, I will come back and let you know;" and, without seeming to notice the downcast look of the young half-breed, he took his course toward the mountain's base. The little stream maintained its meandering character; and the heights, which opened from its immediate banks and merged into the prairie below, began here to contract and increase in height. It was from one of these that Altowan hoped to discover the fire of the party he sought; but he mounted several without success. At last he thought he could perceive a light reflected on a rock where the road leaves the stream and takes a course up an uneven and steep ascent to the left. It was necessary now to proceed with great caution, it being so clear as to enable any one to be seen distinctly on the open ground, while there was no reason to suppose that those on whose trail he was, were in a mood to relax their usual watchfulness; and a ball or an arrow, might be the first intimation of their knowledge of his approach. He therefore descended to the channel of the stream, ready to take advantage of its small, gurgling sound to hide any noise he might himself create; and also to screen himself under the shadow of its banks or the foliage of their sides, in his approach. He had thus proceeded for some time, and the sound of voices indicated that he was very near, when he found the willows, which had hitherto garnished the stream, terminated, and were followed by a plain open space, where there was a buffalo crossing.

---

* A small species of wolf, whose solitary voice during the night, is held to be of evil omen among the Indians, as well as trappers of the mountains.

Altowan now paused. The ill-omened wolf had given a fatal presage of misfortune or disappointment. It was not with the usual joy he felt in rushing into strife that he silently prepared for what might be his death-struggle. It was not now as when his head was high among the sternest warriors of his camp, and his long hair waved in their battles. He was stealing on those he would rather have met face to face; and that ill-boding voice hung upon his thoughts as he examined if his pistols were in order, and disposed them for greater facility in making his approach. The tomahawk and the knife were then adjusted; and, for the first time for many years, he thought of the religion of his early days, and made the sign of the cross. A strange and checkered past—an uncertain future—supplied him with distracting thoughts; and it was not until a piece of clay from the bank fell into the water with a sudden plunge, that he was aware his thoughts were far from his present adventure, and that he was nearing a scene where all his mental and physical powers would be required. He had passed the open, and the willows again grew thick on one side, and the sage bushes of the opposite bank were high enough for shelter; and he could distinguish sounds not far off. It was, therefore, necessary to decide on a course, and not loiter in the open. Altowan bounded across the stream, and in a moment was under the shelter of the bushes on the bank, among which he could proceed to reconnoiter the position of the camp without probable danger of discovery. His progress was not interrupted by any thing worthy of remark, until he came to a point where the bank approaches the water in the shape of a promontory, nearly opposite where he supposed the camp to be. He advanced, and still found the brushwood between him and the light; but the eminence he was on, gave him an opportunity of seeing several horses and some shadows reflected beyond. The number seemed to be greater than he expected; and the sounds, those which were not consistent with the habits of the party of which he was in search. There was a chill that ran through his heart as these indications of his being on a wrong trail struck him. Few men had more constitutional courage, and few possessed so perfect a command of nerve, either in danger or surprise; but the sickness of heart that came over him now, brought him to a state of feeling which called for a rally. Desperate as would have been the attempt, had she been there, he could not have considered her out of reach of recovery; but the probable distance and the time he had lost, were insurmountable difficulties to his overtaking the fugitives on a nearly directly opposite course before they arrived at the Pagan* village.

---

* Pagan is one of the tribes of the Blackfoot nation

The feeling of bitter disappointment is rarely nice in the choice of its vengeance, and that of Altowan was quickened by the belief that the party before him was of the Crow nation. He therefore, determined to leave upon them his mark; and descending abruptly the point from which he had reconnoitered the light, he crossed the stream considerably above where he had perceived the fire, crawling down the bank between where it forms a narrow ledge over the water, and the higher and thicker brushwood which was between him and the now distinct sound of the voices in the camp. The thicket continued until it was easy to distinguish that the language used was Crow; and it was evident that there was a debate of some matter on hand, from there being but one voice now to be heard; whereas before, he had remarked something like clamor. He had now to penetrate but a short space to be able to see what was going on beyond. The stealthy crawl of the Indian, and his inflexible nerve in such situations, are instances of the dominion of habit over the senses, that are almost incredible. The broken sticks, the dry leaf, the rustling branch, and the sharp thorn that would betray another, are instinctively avoided; and Altowan arrived where but a stunted bush obstructed his view of the scene which was taking place around a fire, where some eight or ten Indians were seated, and of whom the gradual insertion of his head into its foliage gave him a view.

Apart from the rest, sat one with his back toward him, and near him were two armed guards; beyond him also appeared another, both with a dejected and sullen air; but a motion around the fire drew his attention from them. A leader apparently, of the discussion, if not of the party, rose, and approaching the two, who appeared to be prisoners, invited them to smoke. The invitation was however, unheeded; and a stern look was all that appeared for answer. But the gleam of the fire, as it shone on that head, showed the features of the Blackfoot partisan. The truth now flashed upon Altowan. They had just been surprised and made prisoners in their camp, by a party of Crows who had seen their fire. Disarmed, the two men sat apart during the council on their fate; and the eye of Altowan again moved round, as far as the limited view of the scene would permit, in search of what had more interest for him. The noise he incautiously made to have a better view, attracted the attention of a figure he had not before seen, wrapped up in a robe, and resembling a bundle. It had scarcely attracted his notice in the first survey; but the attention of the Indian, whoever he might be, had been awakened by his unguarded movement, and he lay watching his bush with the eye and the crouch of the panther. It is impossible to describe the contending feelings of Altowan; but he determined to keep his ground, and by complete stillness, lull the suspicions which seemed to be raised in his observer. The interest excited by what was going on, served to fix and steady his gaze. The Crows who had occupied the part of the circle nearest the Elkhead, moved out, so as to throw the light full upon the prisoners, whose countenances were tranquil; and there was even a look of triumph in their expression, but ill suited to a disappointed expedition and probable death. Two guards were on each side of them; and they were again invited to smoke. The Blackfoot partisan was occupied in arranging his long raven tresses, as, with an air of disdainful calm, he addressed the leader of the Crows: "You can not take it in war; you must crawl like the snake, and overpower the Blackfoot with numbers. See! I have prepared my scalp; it will make you a chief, and hang in your lodge till my brothers come!" He ceased speaking, and the flash of two guns was instantly followed by their reports; and the cloud of smoke that for a moment obscured them, cleared away slowly by the night breeze, and left the one drooping under the pangs of death; but the Elkhead, yet bearing up his form against the ebbing tide, fixed his gaze still on those before him; but its expression waned, for a moment faltered, and his head drooped to rise no more. As soon as the eye lowered from their regard, the Crow rushed forward and seized the hair.

Altowan had bounded on his feet, unmindful of odds, to sacrifice some one to accompany his former companions in the journey they were about to take to their distant hunting grounds; but he had forgot that, though the attention of all round the fire was absorbed, there lay an unsleeping guard close by. The tomahawk, the most silent mode of dispatch, already flourished in his hand; but it was the face of Watoe. Two signs, and he was again in concealment. The operation of scalping his former companions, still occupied the Crows. Idalie lay by the fire, bound. The knife of Altowan was thrown to Watoe, who fixing it between his knees, cut the thongs that confined his wrists, then those that secured his legs, and threw it, with the precision of an arrow, to Idalie. Although Watoe had been left at some little distance, for some reason best known to themselves, the beauty of Idalie had rendered her a prize of moment to the savages, and caused her to be placed close under their eye.

The difficulty of getting away seemed rather to increase as the excitement from the death of the two men subsided; and Altowan, had not Idalie been there, would have rushed to the rescue of the Elkhead; but the stake was more than his own life; and that caution which is sometimes mistaken for fear, now held back him whose reckless daring had ever been the theme of wonder among the Indian camps. He was, in fact, paralyzed; and the idea of returning without success, and losing all he had valued upon earth, was too overpowering a thought to be calmly entertained. All or nothing, were the alternatives. The horses of the party, of which there were but six, including those which had been taken by the Crows, were picketed on the side next the rock that bounded the upper part of the small plain in which they were; and the fire occupied its lower extremity. To create an alarm, would put the party on their guard with arms in their hands, and thus bring greater dangers on her he loved; but these anxious thoughts were again interrupted, when the medicine-pipe was resumed, and the arms laid aside. Altowan had remarked the horse that Roallan had given the Elkhead, not far off from the edge of the willows; and a momentary cloud upon the moon, gave him the hope of reaching him unperceived. Throwing himself down, he crawled toward him; but the snort and bound of one of the others, caught the attention of the party, and a word from the leader brought out an Indian, who crept cautiously toward the startled animals. Altowan lay as still as death, by a log of driftwood which sheltered him from the light, and was actually passed over by the guard, who, proceeding toward the outside, left him apparently as far as ever from his object. Near him however, was a buffalo willow; and the dark soil deepened the shade in its hollow, as well as enabled him to crawl some yards toward a horse that was picketed beside it. He perceived the advantage of being within reach of means of escape, and recognized in the horse whose picket he had approached, the same animal which, the night before, had been given to the Elkhead; but, however brilliant his exploits on a fair and open field, he was not suited to the escape of one desperately pursued over a rugged pass, and by the unrelenting energies of disappointed Indians; and Altowan crawled onward to another, which he knew to possess the faculties he required, and which he could not mistake from his dark color—being of that chestnut which appeared almost black. He was on the other side of him, when he perceived that the horse-guard was approaching, and examining the cords and the pickets. Protected from his view by the animal, and his head bent down behind his neck, the Indian approached without perceiving him, until, close on the other side, he found him stroking his neck, and humming a low air, common to the northern tribes when they go to war. His way seemed clear but for this man; and a moment would decide whether he might yet rest undiscovered to profit by circumstances, or be plunged into a conflict whence escape would be almost a miracle.

The Crow horse-guard came round by the back of the horse, and hesitated, apparently inclined to continue toward the fire; but, not receiving an answer to something he said, stopped and turned toward Altowan with a quick and suspicious motion. There was no flash of the tomahawk—the moon was dark—but it cleft the skull of the Indian, and he dropped without motion at his feet. Assuming hastily the robe of the victim in place of his own, it was now his game to play the part of the fallen guard; but it was hardly to be expected that the watchful habits of these savages could be so long unattracted by the proceedings of Altowan, however warily conducted. Something of a stir, and the turning of the head of those at the fire, gave him notice that one bold push could alone succeed. The dead Indian lay concealed in the hollow from which Altowan had risen, and he appeared standing by the horse with the Crow robe. Detaching the cord and fixing it in his mouth for a bridle, he leaped upon his back without any hurry, and moved quietly toward the fire, continuing his song with an air of ease and unconcern. His horse stumbled over a rope on his way, which gave him an excuse to strike him with the riding cord, the end of which he held in his hand, and place him on his mettle. The Crow partisan rose in some surprise, but Altowan approached with confidence. The light was such as to show his features, having his face to the fire, when, at a few yards, it would be impossible to maintain the deception longer; and he called to Idalie in English to escape to the water by the buffalo road behind her, as he deliberately fired at the leader, and then one of the band who was nearest. Both shots took effect; and while their astonished companions sprang to their arms —which had been, according to a superstitious habit, laid aside while the mystic rites of the pipe went round—he dashed after, and found her on the brink of the stream.

It was not a moment before Altowan, fixing his hold in her girdle, and throwing his weight on the opposite side of the horse, had swung her behind him. His object now was to gain the pass by speed, before his pursuers. He was a little below the camp; and he stopped a moment and hollowed out in Blackfoot, that he had avenged the death of his comrades and carried off their prize. The vaunt lived still in the surrounding echoes, when he heard the bound of his pursuers; but he turned round the promontory which we have before mentioned, and their yells faded on his ear as he urged his horse toward the left-hand pass, where the road becomes more level before the ascent of the mountain. The black soil was favorable to concealment, and its softness prevented all sound. He held his onward way, the horse failed not, and the mountain was near.

The rage of the witnesses of the scene we have just described, was beyond the bounds of control; but though the momentary confusion had given Watoe time to leap on a horse and disappear, yet they were not long in following his example. Supposing he would take the same route as the other, they followed him some little way down the stream, until they caught a view of his single figure in the distance; and the shouts heard by Altowan down the plain, were those of rally from the wrong pursuit. They were now making rapid headway for the same point of ascent over that dark and silent waste; but he had already passed the first step of the mountain, and was about to enter a considerable space of open ground, bounded by a ravine on the right, deepening into a kenion* and clumps of dwarf cedar and pine on the left. It was here that Altowan first paused, and allowed his horse to breathe; and folding his robe under him for a saddle, passed upward off the path, toward the shrubby shelter on the left. Halting in a small water-course, to allow those behind to pass him, he had hardly got off his horse when he heard the steps of his pursuers and some low tones. The movement had saved him. Idalie sprang toward him as she heard the sounds; but that which caused her fear, was to her companion a sign of safety. The night is seldom warm in these lofty regions; but they were sheltered by the elevation of the ground around them, and by its thick and high covering of sage bushes; and the small hollow in which they were, was, fortunately for the horse, covered with a short and thick sward of grass, and he was immediately allowed the length of his rope to finish his evening meal. Idalie, as her first alarm subsided, sank down under the bank, and covering her head, seemed to give herself up to some sad reflections; while Altowan, knowing she had need of repose to undergo the hardships still before them, sat himself down and watched the slight movement of her heaving bosom, as if he could read its thoughts, which, could he have seen them, he would have found simple as those of an infant. At last she slept. Hardly a word had passed between them, but there was an affectionate confidence in her manner, which repaid him for the pangs of jealousy he had previously suffered on account of Roallan.

---

* Name given to a deep chasm.

The fleecy clouds that passed across the moon, were heeded but as they threw a shade on her; and the sound of the torrent, and the moaning of the wind in the forest, so soothing to solitude, lulled him not. The morning watch had almost passed away, when he gently awoke her, and prepared to continue their route to some place of temporary shelter. Two parties of Crows had met with repulse and defeat; and their habits led him to believe, that both would now be on their return; but he wished to gain some more sequestered spot before the dawn, and there wait until he could be more assured of the retreat of his enemies. Idalie was on her feet, and it was not a laborious task to caparison their steed. She looked for a moment inquiringly in his eye, and shook her head as she saw there the signs of fatigue and watch. "You might have let me take a share in what I could perform," she said, as she leaped up behind; and he turned his horse toward the path they had quitted the night before. As it was yet dark, their progress was not rapid, although their way was sufficiently marked by travel, both of buffalo and Indian camps, to be easily distinguishable. It was already a doubtful light, and they had not made more than the distance of four miles, when the gray dawn showed itself over the woody heights on their right, whose ridges rose in fantastic shapes above the dark mantling of pine that clothed their sides. It was a movement of danger from those of the party left behind on foot, as well as those gone on before; but Altowan most feared those on foot, who would have an opportunity of trailing him, even over the granite rocks, if once they fell in with his track. He was aware that those in front, as soon as the light enabled them to see that he had not proceeded, would wait for the others to come up; but he might still follow on the road they had gone, as his track could not, until he left the path, be distinguished from theirs. The woods on the left were now beginning to close down upon the road, which was interrupted by ravines, which disgorged their waters over the yawning chasm on the edge of which it lay.

Altowan paused. "We must take up through this brake; the road is so near that we may be upon them before we are aware. I know there are some opens above;" and he brushed through some dwarf pines into one of these forest glades, which fire or some more unaccountable agent has produced, like gleams of sunshine in the almost impenetrable growth of pine which hangs on the mountain sides. It lay nearly parallel to, but somewhat removed from, the beaten track of "*the Bad Pass,*" and its extent was not above two miles. They still proceeded in silence toward the other extremity from that by which they entered, and where it dwindled into small recesses, fringed by the spreading boughs of lofty spruces, which feather down to the ground—unassailed by tempest, unscorched by heat, and unnipped by cold—the veil of that eternal gloom which reigns within. As they were about to enter one of these recesses—where even solitude appeared to have lost its way—Idalie turned her head, and perceived a horseman skirting the open about a mile behind. Altowan felt his side slightly pressed as she said, "Do not look round; they are after us; do you know a road out?" Instead of obeying her desire, Altowan looked round with a gesture of defiance, shouting to his enemies to come on, until he awoke a hundred echoes. A new spirit seemed to have entered him, and caution was at an end. "If our horse hold, I know a way they dare not follow. Keep your hold; I know you have no fear; but keep your nerves quiet. I was not born to perish in such a race." He had already pushed his horse into a gallop, and pursued a winding avenue, as if the line marked out for some stream.

The animal he rode was of great strength, short of limb, and of unflinching courage and endurance: and although carrying a double burden, proceeded at a surprising pace. Their way was uninterrupted for a considerable time, unless by an intruding branch or an occasional rock. At last, where there was a wider space between the trees, and a considerable quantity of undergrowth, he diverged to the left, breaking some branches as he passed, but suddenly wheeled again to the right. A few hundred yards through the thick wood brought him back on the Indian road, which he crossed among some birch and quaking ash.* Diving through this among piles of rock, he already heard his pursuers on his left, on the ridge above; he still pressed on his horse, leaping among the crashing branches from rock to rock. For a short distance there was now the open channel of a stream, flowing on a granite bed, and bordered by a narrow fringe of turf. He bounded on; but here, though the space was short, the pursuers had a full view of the pursued, and the chasm rung with the echoes of four rifles. Altowan's answering shout was still that of defiance, and the taunting wave of the arm was yet aloft, when horse and riders disappeared headlong over the precipice into the abyss below! The yell above now rose shrill and unanswered.

---

* Name given to the aspen poplar.

CHAPTER IX.

The sun was low, and almost over the western points of the mountain, when we again find the fugitives, enjoying the appearance of security in the solitude of one of those deep glens whose overhanging sides of stupendous height, screened the bottom from observation, and almost from light. There was however, a solitary ray that lingered of the evening sun, and shed a warm glow over rock and bush on its dark sides, bringing them out into high relief. There was a small spot of smooth turf, interspersed with aromatic flowers and sheltered by three or four spruce trees, which seemed to have grown there to form a natural shade and shelter in the rough bosom of the kenion. They stood across the mouth of a recess in the rock; and two of them were so near as to darken it into the gloom of a cave. Behind this sat Idalie, her head slightly raised in the attitude of attention, as if some one's coming had been expected with absorbing interest, although without any appearance of dread. A few arrows formed of greasewood* lay beside her, and a few splinters of agate, from which she had probably selected their heads. A small fire of dry boughs burned before her without smoke, and shed a gleam over that shadowy spot, where no sun had ever shone. The darkness however, was not gloom; and the seriousness of Idalie was not sadness; but there was a confidence and serenity in her mien, that might but ill accord with one who was in the power of a lover whose will had hitherto been his only law, and whose passions had been subject but to his own control. Born in the northern wilds, on the banks of the Siscatchuan, her early days had been spent among the vicissitudes of an Indian life. Her mother fell a victim to some nocturnal attack, over which mystery and grief seemed to have drawn a veil; and at eight years old she had been delivered to the care of a white lady, wife of one of the partners of the Hudson's Bay Company at Red River, to be educated, and to be away from the scenes of danger and violence to which her father's roving life would have subjected her.

Of fierce and dangerous temper, Montalt softened but to his daughter; the idea of whose welfare, real or imaginary, alone would govern him in those sallies of passion by which he was habitually transported when excited, almost to phrensy. He had always played a strange game in promoting the intercourse with Altowan, and at the same time checking any reciprocal affection to that he cared not to conceal in the breast of his daughter; and, strange as it may appear, the warm feelings of this relentless father appeared, like the influence of the sun in the northern latitudes, to have its value with her in proportion to its exclusive coldness to all besides. But the evident predilection of Roallan had given him an undisguised, though uneasy joy; and it would have been productive of a desperate feud, had not the attempt of the Blackfoot chief thrown the chances into the opposite scale, and given *Time*, the mother of events, a subsidy to his aid. The opportunity acquired by Altowan, during the time his rescue had thrown her into his power, was, however, an advantage of which her father had never calculated the results.

---

* A shrub so called, apparently without cause, the wood of which is of great weight, and often used for arrows by the Indians.

It was not long that Idalie sat solitary and expectant; the spreading branches of the spruces which guarded the mouth of the cave, were brushed aside, and Altowan appeared, bearing a portion of the carcass of a bighorn, which he had killed with one of the arrows of which the fellows lay by the fire—the produce of Idalie's labor. The bow was of willow; but it had done more execution than better arms in a less skillful hand. The horse, though somewhat bruised in his limbs by the route they had been obliged to pursue in the bed of the torrent, still showed the quick eye and animated spirit of health, and drooped not under the severe trial of the last twenty-four hours. He cocked his ears, and regarded the intruder for a moment, and then resumed his former occupation, browsing on the short grass which carpeted their retreat. Idalie had no sooner remarked the burden of her companion, than she sprang toward him, and relieving him of it, prepared for their meal by placing some pieces to the fire to roast, with an alacrity which was fully warranted by the length of their fast. Her hair had lost the band that usually confined it, and combed by her taper fingers, hung in profusion over her face and shoulders, concealing her countenance as she hung over these simple culinary operations, by which the most delicious meat is prepared "*au natural*," and of which the proudest and bravest may be the cooks.

The ductile Idalie had not failed to profit by any thing that was amiable or elegant in the society she had met in the Red River establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company. A limited knowledge of music and Italian, and acquaintance with the best English and French authors, had been acquired with a natural taste, and showed themselves in her with an original grace, which softened beautifully the unembarrassed and noble air she inherited from her mother's race; but there still was a boldness or unconcern in her present demeanor, which, considering the relative situation of Altowan and herself, scarcely seemed consistent with female delicacy. The animated countenance of her companion showed that her alacrity pleased him; and he stretched himself on that turf, which had probably never before been trodden upon, and gazed upon the faultless figure that prepared the sylvan meal. One side being partially cooked, the spit was turned so as to place the other before the fire, and they both approached to take off such part as was roasted while the other was in progress. Not a word was exchanged while thus employed, and darkness had drawn her curtain round the scene, except where an occasional gleam fell on the rugged crag that almost overhung their heads and the tendril waving from its crevices. The meal was finished, with nothing beyond those kindnesses which mutual aid required. It was now that a latent embarrassment seemed to spread itself over the appearance and conduct of both; and it is difficult to say how it might have ended, had not the noise of their startled steed broken on the stillness of night, and called them to a sense of other objects than themselves; and while they were starting on their feet to ascertain the cause of alarm, the glaring eyes of a panther were shining upon them. It was but an incident—these animals rarely attacking man—and in a moment the blue, glaring orbs had disappeared, and the alarm they caused had ceased. The arm of Altowan had encircled the waist of Idalie, and the tremor that shook her was not unfelt or misunderstood by him. "Idalie," he said, "we are reminded every moment that you are in a savage and dangerous country; we are thrown into each other's arms by a destiny it is almost impossible to resist. I will renounce all other ambition but that of the country of our birth—for I need not conceal from you that I am also born on the waters of the North—on the war-ground on which I have since tasted the chief joys of existence—

power and fame! What are the pleasures of civilized life to me, who am already blooded in the wild Indian chivalry? There is no war among the whites, where I could rise to command, but by long and servile submission; there is no tourney, there is no hunting-field among them, where danger is courted, and manhood holds a place such as here is accorded to its prowess; but when I come home here, the eyes that welcome me are not those I love. Tell me, Idalie, am I to be driven to desperate acts by her whom I love by a proud choice, as well as by those whom I ought to love by nature? Am I to be driven from the sumptuous domes of my father, reviled as a—" the thought seemed to choke him; "and to waste an affection few are capable of feeling without return?" And the arm that clasped his companion drew her still closer to his beating heart. She placed her hand gently in his. "Altowan," she replied, "I am yours by every tie of affection, and by such as you know not of. Long has my eye been glad when I saw you, and my ear open to the praises that men are not ashamed ever to bestow on him who is beyond the reach of envy. You think me bold; you may have thought me light in my conduct to others, and in holding this language to you; but you have that to learn which may explain all, and what I almost fear to utter." She looked earnestly in his face: "*The same mother bore us, and nature has planted that affection in—*"

The sentence was incomplete; for the expression of wild amaze and dread was too strong in Altowan's glance to be borne. He started from her side. "Ever! ever!" he said; "but who told you this idle tale? My mother died when I was yet an infant." "Listen, then, my brother, for I can surely call you so. There are reasons why my father would never name this connection. He had received, for some years, large quantities of goods on a credit of which no one knew the origin. My mother died, and I know not how; but since I came to the knowledge of our ties of blood, which was communicated to me by Auguste in the pains of death, I have asked my father, and he told me it was true, but that nothing but an extreme necessity might induce me to disclose what he appeared to consider a dangerous secret; and, indeed, he seemed more agitated than I could understand; but, oh, brother!"—and she flung her rounded arms toward him as he started from her embrace, and they fell almost despondingly by her side—

"there is proof enough in the affection I bear you, which I have never felt shame to own." Her words were unheeded, and contending emotions seemed to convulse her companion, while his efforts to command them were painfully evident during the pause that ensued. "Perhaps," he said, at last, "it is I who have not read aright my inward feelings; but I must try to make it so, until I can unravel the strange tale you tell. Oh! Idalie, look not on me with those eyes of love, but rather chill me with the appearance of dislike. It is a strange fate," he continued, musingly, "that I should be raised to such a point of hope but to be dashed down so terribly!" His head sunk in despondency, and he sat long by that neglected and waning fire, whose flickering light showed the heaving bosom and the agitated countenance, he fain would have hidden from his companion, wretched at seeing his sufferings, which she still was unable to assuage.

It was a sad scene in that lone spot, the gurgling stream near, and the distant roar of the cataract and storm, that fill the air with murmurs. Had he not sufficient within his own breast, deep, and now silent? Altowan rose, and walked forward in the deep darkness of the night; and as he rose, Idalie fancied she could read something of tranquillity, as well as resolve, in the glance she had of his features. She gathered some branches of spruce, and laid them as a bed for her brother, and gathering her blanket round her, composed herself to sleep.

CHAPTER X.

On the banks of a small stream, which ultimately finds its way into the upper waters of Snake River, a rugged path, made by the bison descending from a pass above, winds its way through the dwarf willow and quaking ash that line its side, their lighter green refreshing the eye under the darkling pine that hangs over the narrow vale, and occasional opens, where the short turf is decked with almost unknown flowers. On this path we find Altowan, accompanied by Idalie, on horseback, some days after the events of the last chapter. His brow was open, though a shade of thought might be occasionally seen on his countenance; which, however, might be warranted by the dangers of the country as much as by inward feelings. On his companion the early morning air had shed its freshness; and on none of the beauties of nature around, had it rested on any thing so radiant as upon those opening charms. On a sudden turn of the road round a projecting cliff, Altowan stopped to contemplate the scene below, which, though not new to him, is one of undying wonder and magnificence. Far over an extensive vale rise "The Three Tetons," high above surrounding mountains; their peaked heads shine white against the azure sky, while other ranges succeed each other like waves beyond and beyond, until they merge into the purple haze of the western horizon. While the horse of his companion browsed by the edge of the rippling stream, he long and keenly gazed into the distant vale. There was an eager light in his eye as he watched the bison within its range, as their indistinct forms specked the skirts of the forest. So thought Idalie as she joined him, and hung upon his glance, to read there, the indications of their route. But what appeared bison to her, were better known to his more practiced eye. He turned toward her with a slight smile: "They can not be far off, my sister;" and after a moment's pause he added, "You must wait here; I will go down and discover to whom they belong; keep a look-out; should there be a hostile camp, I will not want a means of escape. Look yonder, they cover the whole valley!"

We leave the sister seated on the projecting cliff, and follow the brother down the steep descent that led to the valley below, skirting at one time the edge of the pines, at another following the hollow of a water-course, to approach unobserved. Thus following the sinuosities of hollows or the covert of thickets, he found himself close upon a band of horses that were on the margin of the pines. It required but a glance to recognize them as belonging to his adopted tribe. A moment more, and he had vaulted on one of their backs. Recognized by the horse-guards, by whom he was hailed, he passed down the opening vale through countless herds of steeds of every color, which now almost crowded his way. Youths practicing with the gun and the bow, and women out on various pretexts, covered the plain below and the sides of the mountain above. A stream, which the melting snows swelled to the top of its banks, wound toward the lodges, which appeared thickly covering its sides as far as the eye could reach, without regularity, extending over the level space. He was now approaching the outskirts of the camp. To a stranger, the entering of a great village of that people—wild and unknown even among the wild and unknown tribes that live in these unexplored regions—would have been an experiment of the last resort; but to Altowan scarce a face in that numerous tribe was strange; and here there were assembled nine hundred lodges. Perhaps twelve hundred warriors might be mounted and armed from among them. Approaching nearer, the bustle of population, and the prying curiosity of dogs, and the half recognition of a friend, gradually prepared for the scene within. There was no regularity in the position of these temporary abodes, and they were often crowded upon each other, children, squaws, and dogs alone appearing, and the women always at work at something. All the rest were in idleness or repose, except here and there a naked rider would occasionally urge his horse over every obstacle. Here might a racer be seen picketed by the lodge of his owner, awaiting the evening course; and there, the squaws were saddling others for the chase. The lofty figures of a group of young warriors, dressed with the utmost care, carrying the wings of the war-eagle to fan or shade them from the sun, would parade the open space, where games were occupying the gay throng. The river had also its share of life; bathers of every age were plunging, dolphin-like, in its stream, and coursing along its banks as they emerged from its cooling waters; and the sculptor might pause from the contemplation of the brightest models of antiquity, to behold the free air and native grace exhibited in the folds of the robe as well as the form it inclosed.

There is something which, in the human heart, gives warning of the presence of a friend, as also of a foe, without a recognition either of person or dress; one of these unaccountable instincts caused Altowan—who had not been stayed by any of the numerous greetings he had received—to pull up his horse as his eye was arrested by the figure of a man stretched out at his length, his head reposing in the lap of a girl of sixteen, who was playing with or combing the redundant locks of hair that spread over her knees and concealed his countenance. She looked up and shook back her own raven locks, as she was sensible of his approach; and in the low, guttural tones of her language, announced it to her companion. Bounding to his feet, he gazed for a moment, and then hurried to the embrace of one he had never expected again to see. Pinatsi—for it was he—now conducted his friend to the lodge where he had lived, awaiting his almost unlooked-for return. It was spacious, and reared its head higher than those around; its poles were longer, and the tails of buffalo waved from their ends as they radiated from the summit of the cone; a tripied stood at its side, on which hung a lance and the skin of a cougar, and beside it a bottle containing a mysterious charm. Displacing the piece of buffalo skin which served for a door, Pinatsi entered the warrior chief's abode. The same bed he had often used was on the right hand of the entrance, and greeted Altowan with a welcome that the weary have felt after a day of toil. Made with the accustomed care, the soft robes that were piled upon it presented an appearance of richness in their glossy hues scarcely to be looked for in those rude wilds. To the poles that supported the lodge, were made fast different species of arms—bows, quivers, spears, tomahawks, rifles, and shot-guns. Several beds and a continuation of robes, were laid carefully around the circle; and a considerable space was left in the center, where there was a hole, in which burned a fire at which to light the sacred calumet. No one was in the lodge; but there was that air of order which showed that the care of some friend or dependent, was not wanting in the absence of its owner. A conference of deep interest and considerable duration, succeeded; and at its close, Altowan left the lodge with clouded brow, in search of his sister. Pinatsi, in the mean time, was making arrangements for the reception of Idalie in a family adjoining, attached followers of Altowan.

In the absence of the war party led by the Elkhead, and of Altowan during the earlier part of the season, various changes had taken place in the camp of the Blackfeet. Absence and want of success are always undermining agents against power; and the envy which personal courage, expertness in the chase, superior knowledge, and hitherto signal good fortune, could not fail to excite in the breasts of many aiming at the same goal, had begun to show itself in language as well as in acts. Some delay purposely contrived, in meeting with a party of the Hudson's Bay Company, through whom the supplies of Altowan were usually received, had naturally caused a discontent, if not distrust, fostered by those by whom it had been caused. Several leaders had started up to found their fortunes on the expected fall of the young half-breed; and at the moment of his return, the village was the scene of anarchy and division—the young men taking part with the side to which caprice or interest might lead them.

These accounts had been communicated by Pinatsi; and Altowan had rode forth to bring back his sister, with the anxiety of her fate added to his own wavering prospects, deeply impressed upon his mind. Alone he pursued his course, in a more direct way than that by which he had descended; musingly he passed through the herds of coursers, that with shining coats and streaming manes, gamboled in their summer pride. The war eagle soared aloft in the free air above, and the prowling wolf, with stealthy pace, skirted the surrounding coverts. He had well-nigh reached the place where he would have to ascend from the great valley to reach the smaller one, where the road lay by which in the morning, he had arrived in sight of the camp, when he perceived a naked Indian bounding along to the right, in a course that would intercept his route about the commencement of the thickets of the little stream. The circumstance was scarcely heeded. The animal he rode with short and vigorous steps, commenced the ascent beside the sparkling brook, that leaped gayly down its rocky bed, so soon to lose its individual existence in the turbid waters below. Altowan's looks were sad as he regarded its unconscious mirrors and its foaming speed; a moral he might deduce from its ephemeral course; and perchance such tinged the current of his waking dreams. Visions of ambition and power, were mingled in them with a shade of care as he mounted the turfy steep. He was now arrived within two hundred paces of the rock where he had left his companion in the morning, and the bushy willows extended thus far down the hillside; several slight tracks converging, here entered the thicket, and formed a deep-worn path. Bending to the horse's neck, the rider who follows the steps of the bison through these otherwise impervious jungles, has to force back the boughs to gain a passage, and, covering his eyes, give himself up to the beaten track. An upright man, who would see and act for himself, has no business there. Crouched like the panther under that deep covert, the Indian who had before appeared, caused the horse of Altowan to start and stop. He did not move; and Altowan was scarcely able to distinguish, through the low branches, the figure of Watoe. He would have passed with a friendly greeting; but the almost supplicating expression of the features of the Broadashe—he whose devoted attachment he had long known—and the pleading look that accompanied his request for him to stay his course a moment, was not to be resisted. Descending from his horse, he was soon seated by him on a bed of Alpine strawberries, which carpeted the low vault, that, crypt-like, shaded them from the burning sun. "I wished to steal a moment of the chief, before he gave himself up to her he seeks. My ears have been open since I came back. I have heard much that concerns you; and I have sought you here that you may know it. I have run far through the woods, to meet you unseen." "Well," replied Altowan, "what is it that you would tell me?" and he threw his arm over the shoulder of Watoe. "We would be brothers but for your being a squaw;" and he laughed as he observed the half anger, half confusion of his companion's looks. "It is strange," he continued, "how one I know to be brave, should not aspire to be a warrior among his people." "Suffice it that I am not low in your eyes; but I have that to tell you, that you ought to know. There are more that love you not in the camp than you think for. Pinatsi came and took the two scalps in the morning, and we have been here three days. We thought that you would not escape, and there has been a great division in the camp. The Young Bull and the Spotted Deer, are both anxious to move, but they know not how many followers they may command; and the old chief has never spoken of your death or life since you went off. It is said the English company are not far off, with the Flatheads; but they have been avoided, that you should not have your goods. There are many, I hope, still your friends; but your eyes and ears must be open, and your heart strong; and some say you would betray them to the whites."

During the foregoing harangue, which was somewhat long for the speaker—whose habits, though dissolute and gay, were seldom verbose—Altowan's eyes were intently fixed on his. The usually downcast look was slowly raised when he answered not at the close of his communication, and met the inquiry of the gaze directed upon him by one in which melancholy could not veil the deep interest which lighted their upward glance. Altowan pressed him to his side as he continued: "Then you have not left a place for me in your heart, between Pinatsi, as a friend, and the fair girl you saved?" "Watoe," rejoined Altowan, as he parted the thick hair that fell over his brow, "I am about to tell you what Pinatsi knows not, and what you must not reveal. Idalie is my sister; her mother was also my mother; she will not live with me but in the lodge of Perahoe; your eye must watch her, and I will make a brother of you; and he who is my brother is a chief. But for the present appear not to think of me; you can serve me much, or do me much ill." The light shone through a vacant space in the foliage above, and a sunbeam fell on them. "Behold, the eye of the Great Spirit looks down upon us!" He took the hand of Watoe, and the compact was sealed.

On the buttress-like rock that hung over them above, still sat Idalie, straining her eyes to behold her brother's return, but her thoughts following the more distant wanderings of another. It was with a blush of shame that she perceived those who came to seek her, already under the huge block on which her dreamy watch was kept. She hastened with the step of the argali from its height; her horse was soon caught; a few minutes, and they were on their way to the camp.

It was on the second night after their return, when the sun was sinking behind that region of mountain and valley, which in some parts assumed, in its giant form, the character of the Southern Andes. There is no *Cotopaxi* to light with its terrible fires, the summits that appeared to invade the calm sky of evening; but the mighty wall that separates the water and the lands of half the world—broken, disjointed, but majestic in its ruins—is here awful and grand, even in the remains that by-gone convulsions have spared. The wild Indian, on the vast plains that stretch themselves toward the east and the west, careering in pride, plumed with the wings of eagles, and bearing as trophies the feet of the swift antelope—among these stupendous beacons, crawls stealthily, subdued by their mighty influence, and fearing the mysterious sounds of the distant tempest, as well as the nearer danger of the overwhelming avalanche. It was not far from sunset, and the lower valley had already lost the rays of evening; dark crowds of horses were seen collecting and approaching from the more distant range. Several races had just ended; and those who had witnessed them, were returning from the "Company," occasionally stopping to look on at the different groups of gamblers, that seated round a blanket, were keeping time in their wild notes, to the juggling motions of their games. All occupied in their different amusements and pursuits, the camp at sundown, generally presented a scene of animation and gayety. This however, was suddenly checked. An Indian, advanced in years, of lofty stature, and with an air accustomed to command, spoke a few words as he rode through the crowd. Profound silence now took the place of that multitude of sounds, which but a moment before had filled the air; and the games ceased, and all seemed absorbed in the interest which the communication of the old chief inspired. It was not often that he addressed the village. The usual routine of proclamation was performed by a sort of adjutant or crier, except when there was any petty leader or aspiring brave who thought it might be worth his while to try the effect of his eloquence to raise a war party or a foray against a hostile tribe, and take his chance of success, or proclaim his want of influence, by the manner in which he might be listened to.

The old chief took his course through the middle of the lodges, at a place where by some accident, there appeared to be two vistas forking to the right and the left—one leading through the center, the other toward the outskirts of the camp. The old man turned sharp out of that toward the center, in which Altowan's abode was prominent, and entered the street to the left. To give notice that the whites, and the Snakes, and the Crows were together on the head of the Susquadee, and that the Flatheads, Perdorcilles, and Hudson's Bay Company, were on the upper waters of the Snake River, was the object of his harangue. An excitement is usually produced by any news among these roving tribes, especially where the prospect of war or plunder is involved; and in the present instance, linked with numerous companies of white trappers, the most inveterate enemies of their nation were in their neighborhood. Among groups collected, and after the old man had passed, different spokesmen addressed such knots of hearers as they could collect, in language calculated to excite them to join in some expedition. The female gamblers, were all that remained at their posts; and their wild song occasionally rose above the hum of voices. The clouds of horses which a while ago hovered on the distant heights, were now converging in one vast mass; and as they came on over the hollow-sounding ground, their neighing filled the air, while their dust obscured the atmosphere. Some time had elapsed, and Altowan had seated himself outside his lodge, when Pinatsi called his attention to a band of horsemen decked out for war, who were parading the camp, led by one of those braves who, thirsting for advancement, are eager to seize all opportunities of pushing themselves into notice. They were evidently beating up for recruits;

and it was speedily noised that to revenge the death of the Elkhead was the object of the call. A numerous band, collected by friendship and consanguinity, added to those whose impulse might naturally lead them to join in such an enterprise, could be easily raised in such a cause.

It was with a heavy heart that Altowan turned and entered his lodge. He could take no share in such exploits, as but a moon before, would have promised him the most supreme delight. He thought he could plainly perceive that his influence was on the wane; his spirit was depressed, and he thought it impossible he could ever re-enter upon his former career. The nature of his temperament was such, that disappointment in any favorite design would be almost fatal to his future success. Proud of his Indian descent, it had long been his cherished desire to form a connection with one descended of his mother's nation, and falling back upon resources and rank which he would claim in England, give the world an example, that true nobility may be found in the mind of the wild warrior race of these Western mountains, fit to shine in comparison with the long lines of pedigree, which so often transmit to their descendants corrupt blood as well as degenerate habits. This scheme, which he had pursued with some prospect of success, had been, we are already aware, blighted in all that related to Idalie; and the shock was not to be calmly borne by one of his sanguine temperament. But an observer who could have closely viewed and analyzed his feelings, would have perceived that he had loved Idalie more in connection with this romantic plan, than even for the rare beauty and grace which she added to a temper and disposition hardly to be equalled. His affection for his beauteous sister, was however, as strong as had been his supposed love; and the power to serve her and place her where her young mind might still acquire the graces and accomplishments of education, was now an object which began to engross his thoughts above all others; and the consciousness of her being of his blood, and the hope of so developing and molding her native graces as to win for her an admiration of which the highest dames of England might well be proud, deepened and strengthened the warm affection he felt for her as his sister.

He had still many friends and adherents in the tribe of his adoption; but difficulties and dangers seemed to spread themselves around his favorite prospects, while unlooked-for events were continually obliging him to change his plans for the attainment of his desires. Of his usual body-guard and followers, he knew many would wish to join the war party raising to attack the rendezvous of the whites; and such an expedition would, under any other circumstances, have originated with himself. But of that wild species of strife he had had enough to establish his fame, and to acquire a power which, if he could only retain sufficient to reach that quiet retirement with those he wished to take with him, his intention was to abandon, together with the country. It was to ponder upon his present position, and to shut himself up from the view of preparations in which he could not smother entirely the desire to participate, that he retired to the gloom and solitude of his lodge.

The fire burned but dimly, and the gloom of approaching night had already entered his abode. He sat on the soft couch that had lately yielded but little repose, when a hand was laid gently on his arm, and he found by his side the dark form of the young Broadashe. "You must be well practiced in stealthy entrance, to be able to surprise me thus," he said, as he smiled a melancholy welcome. "My tread is soft now, like the foot of the panther, by those I love; but my spring will be as sudden on those I hate. My blood is boiling at my degradation; I have no fear but for your eye, when it is turned coldly on me; I will proclaim myself a man, and go to war," his slender form dilating as he spoke. "You, who they say came among us protected by the Great Spirit, from beyond the wide waters, borne as the eagle when he sets his wings to the tempest, to waft him to distant lands—you, whose arm is strong, whose heart is big, whose foot is swift, and whose eye is true, and from whose mouth comes knowledge and power—you have never known tyranny, nor been made a slave to the caprices of the strong." His low, and not unmusical voice, was rendered tremulous by emotion, as he added, "But *one* has been kind to me, and but to one can I give a voluntary love in return." "What are they about in the lodge of Perahoe? Those that I love you must also love," said Altowan, after a pause in which to allow the youth to recover from his excitement. "Many young men are hourly there, and I would not that my sister should be won by a lover unfriendly to me, who would separate her from a newly-found brother, or cause any strife between us." "I am there often, while the women work and talk of matters they heed not to mention before such as you. They think it is not worth while to veil their thoughts before me; but Idalie is different from the rest. She, I do not think, has softened her heart toward any Blackfoot. But I see you are sad and doubtful; come in a short time to the lodge of Perahoe, and you will see. There will be many of the young girls there; and from the youths that may be about, to watch their going home, you may judge who may love your sister. You will see also, how I am obliged to act a part different from the Watoe who loves Altowan, and who is in his heart, no woman."

A few seconds, and this strange and wayward creature, as noiselessly quitted as he had approached the side of the only object on earth he loved; but there was a vague fear in his mind—a dread of the greatest misfortune that could happen to him; and that was the departure of his protector from the camp and country of his tribe. The indifference he had shown to the maintenance of that authority, which years of peril and success had raised on a foundation to be rendered solid only by constant attention and care, to the observing eye of Watoe, was an indication as strong as any declaration to that effect.

It was an hour after the above conversation had ended, when Altowan, wrapping himself in a robe—unornamented, but of ample size—was slowly threading his way through the horses, in many places so thickly tied as almost to obstruct his passage. The dwelling of Perahoe was before him, and the blaze of the pitch pine shone through the buffalo skins of which it was composed; and the noise of merriment and wild music, and a crowd near the door, gave token of revelry within. There is a silent authority in the movements of some men, which opens their path through the common crowd. A lofty figure, a noiseless step, the head shrouded up to the pale and beautiful brow, the virgin calm of mien, unquestioning but unquestioned, had their usual effect. The hardy opponent shrunk involuntarily aside; the secret foe and the open friend, alike gave way; and Altowan seated himself in the temporary abode of his sister, scarcely observed. Behind the inner circle, and opposite to that in which the women were gambling with reckless joyousness, while answering with wanton look the well-understood sign or beaming eye that spoke the fire of passion in the language of nature—more delicate, in form as well as feature, than many of the females around—Watoe was the most noisy of the throng, as well as the most entirely abandoned to the pleasures of the passing hour; and he took a delight in returning the glances directed to girls by his side by impatient or doubtful lovers, perplexing and confusing both, and then laughing that wild laugh which had given an habitual leer to his features.

The game at which they played, is one in which much sleight of hand and animated gesticulation, is required. Divided into two parties, sitting opposite each other, a small piece of ivory or bone, is given to one or two of a side, which they convey beneath a robe or blanket, into either of their hands; the drum and song then commence, and to the tune the whole side keep time in a sort of jerking-up-and-down motion, performed by the elasticity of the muscles of the hip, at the same time throwing out their arms, and pretending to transpose the ivory from hand to hand, amid wild gestures and music; and, buoyant with excitement, the opposite party are watching to divine, from the expression of the eye, which this dazzling animation is intended to conceal, in which hand the hidden ivory is contained. An unsuccessful guess, loses a counter; whereas a fortunate one, transfers to *their* side the active part of the game. The loss of all the counters on either side, decides the stakes—when fresh stores of beads, or skins, or paint, or powder and ball, or even horses and arms, are collected and arranged, regulating the value according to individual caprice or want, to commence anew. It was during the pause that took place for this purpose, that Altowan caught the eye of Idalie, which had been before kept attentively lowered from the gaze, that from every quarter, glowed upon her. It was not difficult for her to perceive he had something to communicate. He was already in the moonlight; and his sister, having raised the skin of the lodge behind where she had sat, was at his side; and many a scowl followed them as they rose to leave. On the bank of the full but silent stream, they seated themselves; and their conversation—which was long and in a low tone—appeared to be of the deepest interest. They were on their way back, when Altowan, who had apparently collected himself for some important request, resumed, in answer to something said by his companion, "I have now, then, but one request to make, and that is, that if we should ever arrive together in the great world of the whites, if I should think it worth while to demand it for your good, you will give me the right to bar one union." Idalie thought a moment; the world of the whites was far away; the only affection she had, was in these wilds; and she yielded her consent, adding, that if her father did not object, she was but too willing to abandon the country of the red man. Her simple thoughts could not extend beyond the simple prospects around her; and she saw nothing to hinder her father, and her brother, and Roallan—whose declaration was all she wanted to consider him as her betrothed—from going to a country where she felt assured that her brother had ample funds for their support. "I have to peril much for you, Idalie," Altowan added, "and more for your father, if as I guess, he will fall into the hands of our warriors; and it is but just that I should have, as a reward, the power, as I hope from your promise, of securing your happiness. Promise me yet again, by the remembrance of our mother!" She promised—the simple-minded girl promised in the purity of truth—somewhat startled at the prospective care of her guardian. Still, she registered the word in that shrine which is most sacred and inviolate in the least worldly natures. They were again approaching Perahoe's lodge, where they separated.

END OF VOL. I.